Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Helsinki

THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING AND BECOMING FOR YOUNG CHINESE PEOPLE

A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Wang Ziyu

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

To be presented for public discussion with the permission of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Helsinki, in Juhlasali, Kielikeskus, on the 16th of April, 2021 at 13 o'clock.

Helsinki 2021

Publications of the Faculty of Social Sciences 180 (2021)
Doctoral Programme in Social Sciences

Opponent: Professor Liu Fengshu, University of Oslo

Custos: Professor Ilse Julkunen, University of Helsinki

Pre-examiners:
Professor Marjo Kuronen, University of Jyväskylä
Senior Lecturer Sanna Aaltonen, University of Eastern Finland

Doctoral dissertation supervisors:
Professor Ilse Julkunen, University of Helsinki
Professor Mirja Satka, University of Helsinki

The Faculty of Social Sciences uses the Urkund system (plagiarism recognition) to examine all doctoral dissertations.

ISSN 2343-273X (print)
ISSN 2343-2748 (web)
ISBN 978-951-51-6329-5 (web)
ISBN 978-951-51-6330-1 (PDF)

Unigrafia
Helsinki 2021

ABSTRACT

This doctoral thesis examines how young Chinese people experience being and becoming in their education and how their child-parent relationships relationally influence these experiences. Two groups of concepts frame the analysis: first, being and becoming (including temporality, well-being, learner identity and orientations towards future) and, second, the child-parent relationship (including parental involvement, agency and relational influences).

This study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods. The data was gathered through a China Family Panel Studies survey (N=1306), individual interviews (N=25) and an open-ended survey (N=479). These data were analysed by various methods, including statistical analysis, qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis.

These young Chinese people have experienced multiple ways of being and becoming. The majority juggle being and becoming in a future-oriented way to achieve educational success, while a significant minority focus on the present and on happiness, entertainment and socialising. The findings point to a mix of abundant parental social support (particularly emotional support) and distant, conflictual child-parent interactions in young people's negotiations of being and becoming. Young people's agency has diverse forms embedded in their past, present and future family episodes, and they exercise their agency to mediate their parents' educational involvement.

The thesis suggests that the concept being and becoming heightens the entanglement between the present and the future and the intersection of the temporal and the social, which is increasingly recognised when studying youth. This study also demonstrates that a relational perspective is valuable in uncovering the dynamics, nuances and interactions in young people's living and growing up. These rich descriptions enable further re-envisioning young Chinese people by questioning their traditionally submissive archetype. Such an inquiry into young people's individual experiences and their interactions with their social context pinpoints 'the social' in social work studies at large. This study also draws out implications for educational and career support for young people and relational social work in practice.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämä väitöskirja tarkastelee, kuinka kiinalaiset nuoret kokevat olemisen ja olevaksi tulemisen koulunkäynnissään ja kuinka heidän suhde vanhempiinsa vaikuttaa näihin kokemuksiin. Analyysissä käytettiin kahta käsijärjestelmää: ensinnäkin olemisen ja olevaksi tulemisen välistä suhdetta (sisältäen ajallisuuden, hyvinvoinnin, oppijan identiteetin ja suuntautumisen tulevaisuuteen) sekä lapsen ja vanhemman välistä suhdetta (osallistuminen, tahdonvapaus ja relationaaliset vaikutukset).

Tässä tutkimuksessa käytettiin sekä määrällisiä että laadullisia menetelmiä. Tiedot kerättiin China Family Panel Studies -tutkimuksella (N = 1306), yksittäisillä haastatteluilla (N = 25) ja avoimella kyselyllä (N = 479). Nämä tiedot analysoitiin useilla menetelmillä, mukaan lukien tilastollinen analyysi, kvalitatiivinen sisällönanalyysi.

Nämä nuoret kiinalaiset ovat kokeneet useita tapoja olemisen ja olevaksi tulemisen väliltä. Suurin osa heistä puntaroi olemistaan ja olevaksi tulemistaan tulevaisuuteen suuntautuneella ja koulutuksellisen menestyksen ajattelutavalla, kun taas merkittävä vähemmistö keskittyy nykyhetkeen, mielihyvään, viihteeseen ja seurusteluun. Tulokset viittaavat sekoitukseen runsaasta vanhempien sosiaalisesta tuesta (erityisesti emotionaalisesta tuesta) ja etäisistä, ristiriitaisista lasten ja vanhempien vuorovaikutuksista nuorten neuvotteluissa heidän olemisen ja olevaksi tulevan välillä. Nuorten toimijuudella on erilaisia muotoja, jotka sisältyvät heidän menneisiin, nykyisiin ja tuleviin perhejaksoihinsä, ja he käyttävät toimijuuttaan välittääkseen vanhempiensa osallistumista koulunkäyntiinsä.

Tutkimuksen perusteella voidaan olettaa, että olemisen ja olevaksi tulemisen käsite korostaa nykyisyyden ja tulevaisuuden yhteenkietoutumista sekä ajallisen ja sosiaalisen yhteenliittymää, joka on yhä keskeisempi näkökulma nuorten tutkimuksessa. Tutkimus osoittaa myös, että relationaalinen näkökulma on hyödyllinen, kun halutaan osoittaa nuorten elämisen ja kasvamisen dynamiikkaa, nyansseja ja vuorovaikutusta. Nämä kuvaukset mahdollistavat nuorten elämän ajattelemisen uudella tavalla kyseenalaistamalla heihin liitetyn perinteisen alistuvan arkkityypin. Tällainen tutkimus nuorten yksilölliseen kokemusmaailmaan ja vuorovaikutukseensa heidän yhteiskunnallisen kontekstinsa kanssa tähdentää laaja-alaista yhteiskunnallista ulottuvuutta sosiaalityön tutkimuksessa. Tämä tutkimus ehdottaa myös suosituksia koulunkäynnin ja työuran suunnittelun tukemiseen nuorille relationaalisen sosiaalityön praktiikan avulla.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completing a doctoral thesis is a difficult but inspiring journey. Now, I have almost arrived at the very end of this journey, which gives me a chance to look back at the beauty and progress of the whole process. As Ernest Hemingway said, 'It is good to have an end to journey toward, but it is the journey that matters in the end'. In setting out on this voyage of research, I am grateful to have had people who have supported me, without whom I would not have been able to complete this doctoral thesis.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Ilse Julkunen, for her dedicated support and guidance. Ilse continuously encouraged me and was always willing and enthusiastic to assist in any way she could throughout my entire doctoral study. She not only provided academic insight into my research but also generously introduced me to her family gatherings. Because of her and her family, I felt warmly and amiably welcomed in a foreign country. I would also like to thank my other supervisor, Professor Mirja Satka, for her inspiration and guidance. Mirja was always there to provide enlightening ideas and critical comments during my whole research process.

I am also very grateful for the reviewers of this study, Docent Sanna Aaltonen and Professor Marjo Kuronen, for their thorough, encouraging comments and suggestions to improve this thesis. Moreover, I appreciate Professor Liu Fengshu for accepting the invitation to be my opponent in my public defence.

This research project has received abundant support from the academic community. It has been a great opportunity to attend the National Post-Graduate School for Social Work and Social Services (Sosnet). I thank Professor Juha Hämäläinen, Docent Satu Ranta-Tyrkkö, Petra Malin, Gorana Panić, Tytti Poikolainen, Fan Qingyun and Anna Nikupeteri for their apt comments. I also appreciate Associate Professor Janne Varjo and all the members of the Research Unit focusing on the Sociology and Politics of Education (KUPOLI). I am grateful for your warm welcome and expertise, and with your help, I have been able to develop the thesis further. I also appreciate the treasured support from the doctoral seminar in my home unit, the social work PhD seminar session.

It has been a great honour to study and work in the discipline of social work and among the faculty of social sciences. I would like to thank Lecturer Maija Jäppinen, Lecturer Tarja Juvonen, Lecturer Aino Kääriäinen, Professor Marketta Rajavaara, Professor Marjaana Seppänen, Professor Maritta Törrönen and Lecturer Matilda Wrede-Jäntti. It is your kind help and support that has made my study and life in Finland a wonderful time. Thank you PhD Pia Eriksson, PhD Eveliina Heino, PhD Heidi Muurinen and PhD Laura Tarkiainen for being my colleagues to share happiness and sadness together in this doctoral trip.

I have been fortunate to be part of a collaboration between Sosnet and the University of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, which offered me the chance to start my doctoral studies. I owe special thanks to Professor Zhao Yihong and Professor Pan Yi for their invaluable advice and continuous support. I would also like to thank the China Scholarship Council for funding my research in Finland. I also appreciate Professor Han Jialing for introducing me to the school of my fieldwork and, of course, all the young participants in this thesis.

My appreciation also extends to my family and friends for their encouragement and support over time. I am extremely grateful to my parents, who are always there to 'push' me to strive for my dreams. Thank you for being tolerant and supportive regardless of how far we are from each other. For my dear friends, Qin Yingchao, Yang Xinmeng and Zhang Ruijiao, thanks for 'walking into my life when the world has walked out'. And finally, Juha-pekka Lauranen, thank you for the insightful discussion and accompanying me on this long, winding journey.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This thesis is based on the following publications:

I Wang Ziyu, Anne Kouvonen, Mirja Satka, Ilse Julkunen (2019). Parental Social Support and Adolescent Well-Being: A Cross-Sectional Study in China. *Child Indicator Research*. 12, 299–317

II Wang Ziyu, Mirja Satka, Ilse Julkunen (2020). Planning school transition through relational influence in Chinese families: Adolescents' perspectives. *Young*. Advance online publication. doi.org/10.1177/1103308820940195

III Wang Ziyu (2020). Chinese students' perspectives on learner identity. *Educational studies*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2020.1850425

The publications are referred to in the text by their roman numerals.

TABLES AND FIGURES

ABBREVIATIONS

CFPS	China Family Panel Study
CRC	the Convention on the Rights of the Child
GOV	The State Council of the People's Republic of China
MOE	Ministry of Education
TENK	Finnish National Board on Research Integrity
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WMA	World Medical Association

1 INTRODUCTION

Transitioning towards adulthood and planning for the future have long been central to studies of youth. It is particularly challenging for young people today to grow up, however, due to fundamental changes in education, the labour market and family formation (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Heinz, 2009; Leccardi, 2012; Liu, 2020; Lundqvist, 2019; Sharland, 2005; Wyn, Lantz, & Harris, 2011). Educational qualifications are increasingly indispensable for job applications in the altered labour market, and the time of education has been prolonged because completing high school education and higher education have become common choices for young people. This postponing of employment extends the period of dependence on parents. Young people today must manage these new requirements in navigating their educational futures, creating their identities and seeking good lives. These calculations, ambiguities and uncertainties are much more delicate than how institutions and policymakers narrate them. It is thus timely to focus on these altered individual experiences and disentangle the complexity of being and becoming during the life stage of youth.

The notion of being and becoming is a fundamental concern in studies of youth because it brings young people's ideas about their present and future into focus (Cuervo & Wyn, 2014; James, 2013; Prout, 2005; Spyrou, 2020; Uprichard, 2008; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). These studies understand youth as a process in which young people's lives in the present interact with their aspirations for the future. In this sense, the process of being and becoming occurs over time, so any inquiry into it could be socially and temporally rich to robustly explain young people's biographical trajectories. Focusing on this theme not only corresponds to a steady albeit small literature of how young people experience temporal dimensions – the present and future (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002; Leccardi, 2005; Woodman, 2011) – but also to a wider, more recent concern of envisioning youth in a temporal and processual way (Cuervo & Wyn, 2017; Lundqvist, 2019). This study also pinpoints this intersection of temporal and social experiences (McLeod, 2014, 2017) and shines a spotlight on young people's ideas of being and becoming from varied perspectives. For example, how do young people plan their futures and orientations towards the future? How do they interpret living well in the present and in the future? What kinds of learners are they, and who do they imagine becoming? This study of being and becoming comprises all these topical discussions about orientations towards the future, well-being and learner identity. Although the process of being and becoming penetrates all of youth, this study focuses on the phase of secondary education because of its intensified decision-making, such as the transition towards post-compulsory education, which is a point of departure to explore young people's (re-)definition of being a young person and becoming an adult (Aaltonen, 2013; Tang, 2016; Ule, Zivoder, Lunabba, & Du Bois-Reymond, 2016). Focusing on this school-aged group renders education a primary concern in their lived experiences and thus in this research.

Rather than individually making decisions and doing transitions, young people are relationally embedded in a web of relationships in which their parents are central. This study also takes this relational point of view to approach youth. The dynamics between young people and their parents tends to be 'assumed rather than explored' in existing literature (Wyn et al., 2011, p. 4). Parents are often loosely mentioned in the discussion on inequality reproduction through the concepts of social class or economic status, for example. Instead

of exclusively addressing 'economically rational outlooks' (Irwin & Elley, 2013, p. 112), a growing number of researchers have explored the various impacts parents have on children in terms of parental support (Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007; Woodman & McArthur, 2017), parenting styles (Byun, Schofer, & Kim, 2012; Lareau, 2003; Shih & Yi, 2014) and parental expectations (Irwin, 2018; Irwin & Elley, 2013). These studies seem to have achieved a consensus: when parents are supportive, their children's performance in education tends to be high. The dominant theory used to explain this connection between parents' practices and children's outcomes is social support theory (Cutrona & Russell, 1987): parents protect young people from adverse life experiences. This theory has also been widely accepted to emphasise the significance of family support for children and young people in social work (McGrath, Brennan, Dolan, & Barnett, 2014; Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007; Woodman & McArthur, 2017). My doctoral study follows this path by exploring whether and how supportive parents can relationally influence young people's educational experiences in China.

There are many ways to relationally explore this connection between family and education. Influenced by the shifting fashions in childhood and youth studies, children and parents are now equally considered human agents (Behrens & Evans, 2002; James & Prout, 2015; Mayall, 2002). The influences between children and parents are now seen as mutual rather than unilateral, as if children were passive recipients of their parents' effects. An entire stream of research has employed this new understanding to investigate how young people consider their families when making educational decisions and plans (e.g. Butler & Muir, 2017; Irwin, 2018; Lahelma & Gordon, 2008; Wyn et al., 2011). Likewise, children's agency has increasingly been addressed in re-conceptualising the child-parent relationship (Laursen & Collins, 2009; Maccoby, 2014; Sameroff, 2010). These studies have uncovered much of the complexity of family life. However, few attempts have been made to ground in-depth examinations of the child-parent relationship in the other life domains, for example education in this research (cf. Cheang & Goh, 2018).

Relationally exploring young people's education in their family relations is also consistent with the fundamental idea of social work: person-in-situation. This concept valorises the interdependence between individuals and their environments (Cornell, 2006; Fjeldheim, Levin, & Engebretsen, 2015) that gives individuals social meaning (Harrikari & Rauhala, 2018). Mary Richmond, one of the great founders of the profession of social work, wrote more than one hundred years ago as follows: '… a human being's knowledge of his very self is pieced together laboriously out of his observations of the actions and reactions of others' (as cited in Fjeldheim et al., 2015, p. S47). Families and relatives form the immediate (direct) social environments of individuals. The idea of situating individuals in their environment has also been displayed in the recent trends of relationship-based social work (Murphy, Duggan, & Joseph, 2012; Ruch, 2005) and relational social work (Folgheraiter, 2004). These emerging approaches address the significance of social relations in empowering and supporting individuals. Even with the prevalence of individualism in the academic discourse, relating and belonging to families, friends and institutions is still highlighted in terms of supporting children and young people (Harrikari & Rauhala, 2018; Sharland, 2005). My study will advance this social work orientation by revealing how families are involved in young people's lived experiences in the field of education.

In contrast to Western studies of young people, little attention has been paid to how to employ relational approaches to study the youth in China, although China has the second-

largest adolescent population in the world (UNICEF, 2012). In China, studies on the family-education nexus focus mostly on the influences of parents' social classes and the ethnically specialised parenting style on children's and young people's educational outcomes (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Liu & Xie, 2015; Shih & Yi, 2014; Wu, 2013). China has a long tradition of strong parental influence over their children's primary choices, such as education, marriage and nurturing offspring (Byun et al., 2012; Chao & Tseng, 2002). Chinese parenting has traditionally been categorised as authoritarian, marked by children's obedience to parents' commands (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Nevertheless, emerging studies have shown dramatic changes in child-parent relationships in the past few decades due to the implementation of a 30-year one-child policy and the cultural influences of Western ideals of 'good' parenting (Cheang & Goh, 2018; Liu, 2010; Qi, 2016; Wang, 2014). These studies have shown that many Chinese parents respect and even spoil their children. Parents prioritise the child-parent relationship even over their relationships with their spouses (Chao & Tseng, 2002). The only child in each family is given great aspirations and investment to grow up (Fong, 2004; Ngan-ling Chow & Zhao, 1996). More studies are needed to discuss how these structural changes in the child-parent relationship influence young Chinese people's education.

The overarching question of this study is how young Chinese people experience being and becoming in the arena of education and how their child-parent relationships relationally influence those experiences. Three sub-questions constitute this main question from various perspectives (Table 1). In exploring these research questions, I position my thesis within the social-science discussion, including the sociology of childhood and youth studies, educational studies and social work. As discussed above, these research fields approach young people's living and growing up from varied perspectives. Such a multidisciplinary setting provides new, inclusive insights into youth experiences and further deepens the understanding of youth in social work. In social sciences, youth is often considered a social process displayed by social practices, so it is common to see overlap of the periods of childhood in literature in particular regarding school-aged young people (Furlong, 2013). I use the term 'young people' to describe the participants in this study between the ages of 11 and 17 years old, most of whom are in secondary-level schools.

Table 1 The original sub-studies and sub-questions

Sub-study	Research question	Data
Parental social support and adolescent well-being: A cross-sectional study in China	Whether the two components of parental social support – emotional and instrumental – are associated with the different aspects of adolescent well-being in the contemporary Chinese context	CFPS survey (N=1306)
Planning school transition through relational influence in Chinese families: Adolescents' perspectives	How young Chinese people plan their transitions to post-compulsory education through relational influence between them and their parents	Individual interviews (N=25)
Chinese students' perspectives on learner identity	How Chinese students construct their learner identities through navigating different subject positions at schools and in their families	Open-ended survey (N=479)

The following empirical study is based on the national survey data of China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), individual interviews and an open-ended survey. The data analysis includes many methods, including statistical analyses, qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis.

2 RECENT TRANSFORMATIONS OF EDUCATION AND FAMILY LIVES IN CHINA

This introduction focuses on the decisive changes and current situations of the education and family contexts in China since the Economic Reform in 1979, during which the political and structural reforms decisively impacted the lives of current young generations. The cultural traditions still maintained in these fields are also discussed.

2.1 RECENT TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN CHINA

China's education sector can be disaggregated into four levels: primary, lower secondary, higher secondary and higher education (Table 2). Chinese children and young people are obligated to attend primary school and middle school. Enrolment in this compulsory stage of education is based on areas of residence. After graduating from middle school, young people can choose whether and how to continue their high school education. Such a decision is predominantly determined by young people' performances on their public-entrance examinations of high school education, *zhongkao*. Around half of the young people who achieve higher grades on *zhongkao* can be enrolled in academic high school, while the other half continue their education in vocational high schools. A third way, which is increasingly accepted by young people, is art programmes in academic high schools that have lower academic requirements and an art requirement[1]. After graduating from high school, these young people transition to tertiary education, which is mainly determined by their grades on the public-entrance examination of tertiary education, *gaokao*.

Table 2 Education system in China

Starting age	School programme	Education level	Entrance exam
25+	Doctoral programme (3–4 years)		
23	Master's programme (2–3 years)		
18	Undergraduate programme (4 years)	Higher education	Gaokao
15	Academic/vocational high school (3 years)	Upper secondary education	Zhongkao
12	Middle school (3 years)	Lower secondary education	
6	Primary school (6 years)	Primary education	
3	Kindergarten (2 years)	Pre-school education	

[1] These are the educational pathways that young Chinese people, including the participants, mainly choose. There are other paths to continue post-compulsory education in China, such as private high schools and high schools abroad (Hansen & Woronov, 2013), but these alternatives were hardly referred to by the investigated young people.

These high-stake exams highlight the exam-based selection system and are related to the famous exam-oriented education in China. This orientation is commonly considered a Confucian legacy often attributed to the 1300-years prevalence of the civil-service examination system (*keju*) in Imperial China (Curran, 2014). Passing this exam was the only path for young people to be selected for state bureaucratic positions and upward their social classes. Although *keju* was abolished in 1903, high-stakes-exam-oriented learning and teaching ideas have been maintained. To replace this tradition, which values grades above all else, the national 'quality education' reform on compulsory education was initiated in 1999, which included introducing formative and multidimensional evaluation systems, prohibiting ranking young people based on exam grades and reducing school hours, amounts of homework and exam frequency (You, 2019; Zhao, 2015). Despite many attempts to change them, however, the 'objective' judgements are still considered the most reliable, most equitable method for selecting intellectual elites (You, 2019). As a result, the decisive roles of *zhongkao* and *gaokao* in a Chinese student's educational biography have hardly changed.

It is common for current young Chinese people to continue their education. The enrolment ratios for post-compulsory education and tertiary education were 89.5% and 51.6%, respectively, in 2019 (MOE, 2020). The massification of higher education and the political promotion of vocational education play important roles in the great expansion of high school and tertiary education in the last two decades. Higher education in China is not free anymore, and many private colleges have been allowed to start since the 1980s (Chan & Wang, 2009). Thereafter, there was a significant increase in higher-education enrolment (Mok & Wu, 2016). Moreover, the Chinese government has politically promoted and financially supported vocational education since 2002 (GOV, 2002). These burgeoning vocational education programmes re-position possible drop-out young people to continue their education (Hansen & Woronov, 2013). Put together, young Chinese people have many ways to stay in school, and their education time has been prolonged.

Due to the expansion of post-secondary education, educational qualifications have become predominant eligibility standards for selecting employees (Mok & Wu, 2016). One national longitudinal survey (1993–2011) showed that years of education influence incomes (Castro Campos, Ren, & Petrick, 2016). The prevalence of this credentialism has caused rapid diploma inflation, and the unemployment of university graduates has become a major social problem. Around 15% of Chinese university graduates were waiting for employment or were unemployed in 2017 (Yue & Zhou, 2019). In this precarious employment situation, however, young Chinese people compete even harder for top-tier universities that offer more chances to find stable jobs, avoid labour jobs and upward their social classes (Kim, Brown, & Fong, 2016). The situation is different in rural areas, as rural young people have more difficulties in this competition. Schools in urban areas can more easily allocate resources and retain qualified teachers, and rural parents often attempt to obtain an urban household registration to send their children to urban schools as early as possible (Hansen & Woronov, 2013). This rural-urban division is a profound structural inequality in China; those with few resources usually approach such obstacles to social mobility by seeking the best education possible for their children.

These institutional changes in Chinese education inform the significance of the stage of youth in an individual's educational pathway. First, in this stage, young Chinese people face the two most significant school transitions, which are marked by *zhongkao* and *gaokao*. The

results of these two high-stake tests significantly impact their educational and occupational futures (Tang, 2016). Second, although high schools have enough positions for almost all middle school students to transition into them, inequalities between programmes certainly exist. It has been academically and publicly acknowledged that young people who go to academic high schools have greater chances to attend (top-tier) universities and acquire well-paying jobs (Kim et al., 2016; Wu, 2017). These unequal educational opportunities drive young Chinese people to compete for the narrowed academic educational path (Andrew B Kipnis, 2011; Zhao, 2015).

2.2 RECENT TRANSFORMATIONS OF CHINESE FAMILY LIVES

Confucian culture stresses the role of families in the social order and ethics through filial piety (Liu, 2008; Tu, 1985). Filial piety requires that adults regulate and protect the next generation, who in turn care for their elders. This ethic suggests hierarchy and mutuality in intergenerational relations, which has been maintained by the Chinese for thousands of years. In a time characterised by the privileges of self-reliance and individualism, family still is an essential place of reciprocities in which Chinese individuals are embedded (Barbalet, 2016). Valuing families has become a distinctive feature of China and other countries with Confucian heritages.

Parents' roles in protecting subsequent generations have been reinforced by the one-child policy that had been implemented around 30 years (1979-2015). Although the policy was abolished in 2015, it has left an immense impact on family structures and child-rearing practices in China. Nuclear families have largely replaced extended families, for example, and become the main family type in China. When lower fertility becomes the norm, children become the 'sole bearer of meaning and hope in their [parents'] lives' (Ngan-ling Chow & Zhao, 1996, p. 53). On the one hand, children's positions in their families have largely improved as a result, particularly previously 'disvalued' daughters, who now receive treatment equal to sons (Fong, 2002). Children receive more respect and love from their parents overall. On the other hand, the single-child family structure drives parents to devote all their attention to protecting their children from any risk and ensure them promising futures. Heavy investments and great expectations are all placed on the single child in each family (Fong, 2004). These families live with this paradox of demand and respect.

Chinese parenting is chiefly characterised by control and assertiveness in contrast to Western parents' democratic, affectionate practices (Chao & Tseng, 2002). However, this Chinese obedience-authority reciprocity has been challenged by significant societal and economic transformations in the past 40 years. In a longitudinal study of Shanghai parents' child-rearing beliefs from 1998–2002, parents increasingly stressed warmth, autonomy and support and withdrew strategies of control (Chen & Chen, 2010). Other studies have also shown that parents are now more concerned with children's emotional well-being (Way et al., 2013) and they commonly use the strategy of reasoning to negotiate with their children (Wang, 2014). Children and parents have also increasingly experienced an equal sense of power in their relationships (Fuligni & Zhang, 2004; Qi, 2016). Chinese parents are increasingly influenced by the standard of 'good parents' in Western countries and desire to maintain 'good' relationships with their children. These changes in the social contexts of

young Chinese people are the macro-level background within which to understand the following micro-level analysis of their individual experiences.

3 BUILDING THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section first outlines the prevalent discussions on being and becoming in childhood and youth studies and clarifies how this thesis employs the concepts to understand the social aspects of youth from a temporal perspective. To address this entanglement of the social and the temporal, this section focuses on a series of pertinent concepts: temporality, orientations towards the future, learner identity and well-being. Although much of the literature in these fields has provided a rich understanding of being and becoming, it has paid little attention to how young people negotiate this temporal process with their parents in the arena of education, which is of interest in this thesis. Thus, this section turns to the literature on families' influences on education, with a focus on family socialisation, parenting styles, young people's agency and relational influence. Building on these conceptual resources, this section proposes the conceptual framework of this thesis by laying the ontological and epistemological foundation of a relational perspective.

3.1 YOUTH, BEING AND BECOMING

Much of the research on being and becoming for young people relates to temporality. Youth studies have made strenuous efforts to examine young people's temporal experiences (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002; Leccardi, 2005; Woodman, 2011). A primary goal is to explore how young people sense the three dimensions of time – past, present and future – in their everyday lives. This examination, of course, must be positioned within the major social changes in post-industrial countries, where younger generations follow traditions less and are increasingly required to take responsibility for themselves (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). These emerging institutional uncertainties impede young people's long-term plans and pursuits of certain paths towards adulthood, instead supporting and prolonging the present. Section 3.1.1 presents this discussion on young people's varied temporal experiences in detail.

From such a temporality perspective, the concept of being and becoming highlights the process of biographical time and challenges the binary of being a young person and becoming an adult (Davies, 2011; James, 2013; Spyrou, 2020). This concept admits the entanglements of different temporal dimensions, and exploring it uncovers their interactions. Despite this particular relevance to temporality, being and becoming transcends individual and social definitions of time as such in youth studies and childhood studies. Rather, it highlights social experiences and everyday lives over time and thereby analytically prioritises both the continuities and disruptions in the life stages of childhood and youth (James, 2013; Prout, 2005; Uprichard, 2008). It concerns the co-existence of young people's navigations of here-and-now issues and their future development, not necessarily in a progressive sense (Nielsen, 2016). In this sense, youth has been pictured as a temporally, socially, historically rich process, which responds to Leccardi's argument (2014, p. 20) that temporal experience is 'an intrinsic dimension of subjectivity and sociality'. In other words, the ways young people sense the past, present and future intersect with their processes of self-identification, expressions of well-being and rationales for future planning.

This adds temporal sensitivity to the study of the social processes and practices of youth (McLeod, 2014, 2017).

This issue about young people's living and growing-up has widely been discussed in the literature of youth transition. The large literature on youth transition has focussed on the transitions structured by institutions, such as successfully transitioning to the next educational level, gaining independence from parents and starting to work professionally (Aaltonen, 2013; Furlong, Woodman, & Wyn, 2011; Wyn et al., 2011). School transitions were of particular relevance to the investigated school-aged young people, but the experience in education notably overlaps with young people's daily lives in other fields, such as peers, families and communities (Valentine & Skelton, 2007). Viewed through the concept of being and becoming, how young people transition towards adulthood can be comprehended as a process of changes (and continuities) which 'requires an intensive and continuous activity of interpretation, negotiation, reconciliation, and decision-making' (Cuconato & Walther, 2015, p. 291; Thomson et al., 2002). This motif emphasises the potential details, irregularities and uncertainties of growing up that have long been neglected and unsupported by policymakers. Consistent with this focus, this thesis employs the concept of being and becoming to frame young people's individual experiences of living and growing up, not attending to the 'outcomes' of institutionally regulated transitions but to young people's (varied) understanding of how to be a young person and how to become an adult in the context of education. In the following, I introduce how the umbrella concept of being and becoming is embodied in three pertinent concepts in sub-studies – orientations towards the future, learner identities and well-being – building on recent youth studies, childhood studies, educational studies and social work studies.

3.1.1 TEMPORALITY AND ORIENTATIONS TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Being and becoming commonly represent two dimensions of temporality, the present and future, in social science (Ansell, Hajdu, van Blerk, & Robson, 2014; McLeod, 2017). Temporality 'is regarded here as a social construct that must be contextualised in relation to social, political and historical events, and has a social function, coordinating, structuring and constantly interacting with place and socio-geographic contexts'(Lundqvist, 2019, p. 2). In the last few decades, on the one hand, pervasive new technologies have saved us time; on the other, the acceleration of the rhythm of life has diminished temporal resources (Leccardi, 2005; Rosa, 2003).

This paradox impacts individuals' experiences of present being and future becoming. The sense of the present is extended (Nowotny, 1994), and 'people feel unanchored in time'(Woodman, 2011, p. 112). 'The present is no longer interpreted merely as part of the way on a straight line leading to a future open to progress, but as part of a cyclical movement' (Nowotny, 1994, p. 58). The future is a kind of an extension, not a progressive outcome, of the present. Paralleling the experience of an extended present, individuals increasingly sense that their futures are uncertain (Leccardi, 2005). The certain, linear pattern of progress that the concept of the future represents in modern society is now treated as outdated. In this sense, individuals can hardly follow standardised life courses or predict their futures (Leccardi, 2005). Such an idea of temporality may guide individuals to value

the present and avoid or stay open to unknown futures (Vieira, Pappamikail, & Resende, 2013).

Despite the difficulty of planning the future, however, it has not completely disappeared (Anderson et al., 2005; Brooks & Everett, 2008). Brannen and Nilsen (2002) summarised three models of how young people relate to the future: deferment (present-oriented orientation, holding an abstract conceptualisation of the future); adaptability (future as a risky but positive controllable); and predictability (focusing on long-term planning). Likewise, Woodman (2011) found the multiplicity of individuals' temporal orientations, the present- and future-centred categories. Woodman argued that all the young people investigated in his study had interests in shaping the future, as evinced by their accounts of continuing education and getting employed, for example, but they had varied strategies of enjoying their present chances and employing long-term tactics. Sub-study II also takes this concern of young people's orientations towards the future and investigates their plans of transitioning towards post-compulsory education.

3.1.2 LEARNER IDENTITY AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

Learner identity refers to how learners look on or conceptualise themselves (Ball, Maguire, & Macrae, 2000; Coll & Falsafi, 2010; Reay, 2010) as an ever-changing process of being and becoming in the field of education. This understanding is based on the trend of envisioning identity as a dynamic identification over time and space rather than a passive, rigid, given social category. Nielsen (1996) borrowed Sigmund Freud's metaphor of 'magic writing pad' to conceptualise identity, writing, 'The subject is like a wax tablet or pad which all the time receives new inscriptions upon it without having the old ones erased'. McLeod and Yates (2006) continued to use this metaphor to highlight the temporality of identification. Identity is constructed through new social practices, all of which leave 'marks' on the 'wax pad'. Simultaneously, the future direction also orients individuals' senses of selves in the present (Worth, 2009). When the wax paper is changed, the old inscriptions continue to leave marks on the wax pad. Changes and continuities imply the relations between the past, present and future. Revealing this temporal perspective requires us to position identities in specific places and historical moments. This study also explores this motif of seeing identity as constantly processed when analysing young people's learner identities. The investigation of learner identity formation reveals how future insight collides with present vision. The processes of identifying who I am and who I may become involves both the individual and the social. Sociologists such as George Herbert Mead (1934), Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman (1967), and more recently Richard Jenkins (2008), all viewed identity as the entanglement of personal projects and shared social roles. Mead (1934) distinguished the 'I' and the 'me'. The 'I' represents the individual perspective of the self and exercises the agency to reflect and create, while the 'me' represents the social perspective of the self formed based on the social attitudes of others. The process of identifying the self is an ongoing synthesis of the 'I' and the 'me' (Julkunen & Rauhala, 2013). Berger and Luckmann (1967, p. 195) built on this idea by explicitly arguing that '[identity] is a phenomenon that emerges from the dialectic between individual and society'. Chappell et al. (2003) also integrated this social-individual dimension into their understanding of learner-identity formation. Their framework analytically divided the identification process into two

intricate processes: how individuals assign the self with subject positions through their social relations (relational identification) and how they use their reflexivity to generate a stable thread to represent the self (reflexive identification). Sub-study III employed this framework to analyse the formation of learner identity during young people's transitionning towards post-compulsory education.

When integrating the social and the individual in identification, social relations play significant roles in providing socially existing subject positions (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Lawler, 2014). As Hopkins (2010, p. 7) said, 'Identities are therefore constructed through social relations, articulated in particular ways and replicated by individuals and groups'. Among all the social relations, the 'bonds of attachment' of significant others has been paid much attention in representing the self, that is, the relational self (Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). Kaisa Ketokivi (2010, p. 130) used this concept to describe 'particular bonding processes between selves and those significant others that have an accentuated role in the formation of the self'. This emphasis on the relations to significant others when studying individuals' identifications is a concern of this study as well.

3.1.3 WELL-BEING AND WELL-BECOMING

Well-being commonly regards 'what is good for the individual from their own perspective'(Ben-Arieh, Casas, Frønes, & Korbin, 2014, p. 3). The discussion of 'what is good' for children and young people is often related to issues of being and becoming (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014). Living well covers both the good states in childhood and youth ('well-being') and in the following adulthood phase ('well-becoming'). Many studies concentrate on the present well-being of children and young people, such as the discussions of their citizenship (Roche, 1999), participation (Wyness, 2009) and mental health (Desjardins & Leadbeater, 2011), while other studies concern well-being for the future, such as successfully transitioning to employment (Roberts, 2011; te Riele, 2004). The discussions of children's and young people's well-being and well-becoming tends to stress one over the other (Frønes, 2007).

Regarding this debate of 'well-being' and 'well-becoming', the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) claims that children have rights to achieve well-being in the present and for the future[2] (UNICEF, 2006). This rights-based approach has been widely used to conceptualise young people's well-being (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014; Bradshaw, Hoelscher, & Richardson, 2007; Kamerman & Gatenio-Gabel, 2014). This approach stresses the 'realization of children's rights and the fulfilment of the opportunity for every child to be all she or he can be' (Kamerman & Gatenio-Gabel, 2014, p. 405). The CRC comprises the international and fundamental guidelines of the rights that are essential for the well-being of children and young people, such as securing education (Articles 28 and 29), physical health (Article 24) and standards of living (Article 27). This idea of multiplicity has also been used when developing children's and young people's well-being indexes (Bradshaw & Richardson, 2009; Martorano, Natali, de Neubourg, & Bradshaw, 2014; Pollard & Lee, 2003). Sub-study I employed this multiple-domain understanding of well-being to examine the various interconnections between parents' social support and young people's well-being in health statuses, depression, self-perceptions and academic attainment.

[2] See also the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (UNICEF, 2020).

The most significant protective factor to maintain children's and young people's well-being is 'the feeling of connectedness or belonging to family and/or school'(Cahill, 2015, p. 102). UNICEF also heightens the roles of families, communities and states as guarantors to increase children's and young people's resilience to adversities (UNICEF and Protecting Through Education, 2013). This way of improving children's and young people's well-being has been stressed in social work as well (Alameda-Lawson, Lawson, & Lawson, 2010; Featherstone, Morris, White, & White, 2014; Kamerman & Gatenio-Gabel, 2014; Sharland, 2005). Sub-study I further categorised parents' social support into instrumental and emotional types to investigate their varied roles in supporting young people to live well. Sub-studies II and III then elaborated on this relatedness by focusing on negotiations, conflicts and adjustments between young people and their parents regarding their well-being in the present and for the future.

Although the rights that the CRC entitles to children and young people play significant roles in measuring and promoting their well-being, it is also necessary to understand it flexibly. Taking a normative way to use the rights-based approach may be overly general to reflect the diverse conditions of the lives of children and young people globally (Björk Eydal & Satka, 2006). One principle of the CRC is to 'assure the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child' (United Nations, 2009, p. 3). This right of children and young people requires including their voices when discussing the question of living well in the present and future (Kamerman & Gatenio-Gabel, 2014). Accordingly, Sub-studies II and III also paid attention to young Chinese peoples' interpretations of a 'good life', which both contrast with and complement the common understanding of a good life in academia and politics demonstrated in Sub-study I.

3.2 SHAPING BEING AND BECOMING IN FAMILIES

In the arena of education, the social context of this study, family affects children and young people in relation to completing education and transitioning to adulthood. Despite the great diversity of this family influence, such as cultural capital, family socialisation, parenting styles and the child-parent relationship, a recent trend in this field is to shift from exclusive attention on parents to a relational interplay between parents and children. As such, the following chapters introduce this well-established field of work on the intersection of family and education.

3.2.1 FAMILY SOCIALISATION AND PARENTING STYLES

The most far-reaching concept to define families' influences on children and young people is probably family socialisation: 'the processes whereby naive individuals are taught the skills, behaviour patterns, values, and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up' (Maccoby, 2014, p. 3). Although such transmission can occur among peers, in schools and at work places, 'the child's family of origin [is] the first, and in many cases the most enduring, socialising institution'(Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Maccoby, 2014, p. 4) . In family socialisation, parents often play supportive

roles in helping children and young people cope with adversities and ensure security. Many studies have noticed the diversity of parental social support, and much of the discussion has focussed on perceived and received social support (see a review Chu, Saucier, & Hafner, 2010). Recently, however, an emerging body of literature has suggested another division of social support into emotional and institutional support, and it has investigated their varied effects on individuals' occupational and interpersonal relationships (Cheung & Sim, 2017), self-concepts (Zhu, Tse, Cheung, & Oyserman, 2014) and suicidal ideation (Park, Cho, & Moon, 2010). Emotional support is linked to behaviour and attitudes of respect, care, warmth and love, and instrumental support refers to practical assistance (Cutrona & Russell, 1987; Shakespeare-Finch & Obst, 2011). Sub-study I follows this discussion and examines how parents' emotional and instrumental supports are connected to their young people's well-being.

A relevant question of family socialisation is the connection between the diversity of parents' social support and the inequality of young people's education. Perhaps the most prominent theory with this theme is Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital (Evans, Kelley, & Sikora, 2014; Milne & Aurini, 2015; Sheng, 2014b), according to which, compared to working-class parents, middle-class parents possess more cultural capital, such as knowledge of scholarly culture (Evans et al., 2014), education information (Dumais & Ward, 2010), higher expectations (Irwin & Elley, 2013) and exploitation of education policies (Milne & Aurini, 2015) to increase their children's educational chances. Lareau's seminal work (2003) furthered this trend by concentrating on the process of this intergenerational transition, not unequal educational outcomes. Lareau categorised two distinct parenting styles: 'concerted cultivation' among middle-class parents and 'natural growth' among working-class parents. Concerted-cultivation parents are keener to cultivate their children's talents, opinions and skills than their counterparts. This cultural reproduction theory exerts great influence on studies about parenting in East Asia. Many researchers have confirmed the link between social class and cultural capital in Japan (Yamamoto & Brinton, 2010), Korea (Byun et al., 2012) and China (Shih & Yi, 2014), but the association between cultural capital and educational outcomes remains elusive as Sub-study I shows (Byun et al., 2012; Liu & Xie, 2015). Such striking findings, which are mainly from quantitative studies, suggest new ways to understand the family-education nexus in detail as what the Sub-studies II and III furthers.

Sociologists are not the only academics interested in parenting; researchers in psychology also started their studies on parenting styles in the late 20th century (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Laursen & Collins, 2009). Baumrind (1967) created the most well-known typology of parenting; later, Maccoby and Martin (1983) added one style to her typology and used two dimensions, demanding and undemanding, to categorise parenting styles (Table 3). In their framework, authoritative parents are responsive to their children's needs, are warm and supportive, and involve their children in decision-making when necessary. Authoritarian parenting, in contrast, addresses parents' demands for children's compliance. Permissive parenting refers to child-centred indulgence and shows low demands on children. Finally, uninvolved parents are disengaged from their parenting roles. This typology has been widely tested and employed across many countries, with revisions when applied to Chinese families (Chao, 1994; Chao & Tseng, 2002; Stewart, Bond, Kennard, Ho, & Zaman, 2002; Wu, 2013). Chinese parenting has commonly been categorised as 'authoritarian',

represented by the stereotypical image of the 'tiger mother'(Cheah, Leung, & Zhou, 2013), in contrast to Western 'authoritative' parenting.

Table 3 The typology of four parenting styles

	Responsive	**Unresponsive**
Demanding	Authoritative	Authoritarian
Undemanding	Permissive	Neglecting

Resources: Maccoby and Martin (1983)

This breakdown of parenting styles led to great academic interests in their varied influences on children and young people. Many studies show connections between authoritative parenting and children's mature, competitive, cooperative performances, such as lower depression (Piko & Balázs, 2012), less risky behaviour (Bahr & Hoffmann, 2010) and better academic achievement (Aunola, Stattin, & Nurmi, 2000; Chao, 2001; Rivers, Mullis, Fortner, & Mullis, 2012). As a result, authoritative parenting is strongly recommended as 'good parenting'. Surprisingly, although East Asian parenting is commonly identified as authoritarian, it also linked with excellent educational outcomes (Chao, 1994; Wu, 2013). More studies are required to explain this paradox between the imprudent parenting style and the expected educational results in East Asia. Sub-study II adopted this parenting typology to examine the child-parent relationship's interconnection with young people's educational decision-making. This inquiry responds to the above-mentioned paradox from the largely ignored perspective of youth experience.

3.2.2 YOUNG PEOPLE'S AGENCY AND RELATIONAL INFLUENCE

The role of children and young people is increasingly emphasised in the discussion of family influence in their everyday lives (de Moll & Betz, 2016; James & James, 2004; Morrow, 2002). Here, agency is a core concept. In the most basic sense, agency refers to individuals' capabilities to engage and change the social world (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Fuchs, 2001; Hitlin & Elder, 2007). It represents active subjectivity, intentional action, 'free will', individual decision-making and self-expression in youth studies (Coffey & Farrugia, 2014; White & Wyn, 1998). Such an understanding of agency is related to '[giving] voice to children's voice' (James, 2007). In this, agency is an analytical tool to explore the perspectives of children and young people, such as their identities, cultures and experiences (Coffey & Farrugia, 2014). These studies are child-and youth-centred, which positions them as the opposite of adult-centred studies (Esser, Baader, Betz, & Hungerland, 2016). The concept of agency has thus significantly shifted our understanding of youth by privileging young people's experiences and perspectives.

Despite the flourishing studies about agency, scholars have increasingly noticed the danger of losing a social perspective when using this concept. As Esser et al. (2016, p. 6) criticised, the understanding of young people's agency tends to be 'based on a de-historicised, de-socialised, individual-centred idea of action. Action becomes, simply, a human capability.' Studies on agency seem normatively driven, considering only certain types of agency is justified, such as Western standards of masculinity and autonomy (Punch, 2016) and

resistance to existing social structures (Coffey & Farrugia, 2014). This limited, simplified understanding of agency can reduce the analytical power of this concept in relation to the diverse, complex social lives of young people (James, 2007).

One eminent attempt to give social meaning back to agency is to clarify this concept in a relational sense (Juvonen, 2014). Here, Emirbayer and Mische's seminal work 'What is agency?' is probably the most fundamental. 'We define [agency],' they write, 'as the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments – the temporal relational contexts of action – which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgement, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situation' (1998, p. 970). By this definition, agency is relational, social and temporal. Such an interpretation of individual agency has also been explained using the concept of 'bounded agency'(Behrens & Evans, 2002). Agency is considered a 'socially situated process, shaped by the experiences, the chances present in the current moment and the perceptions of possible futures'(Behrens & Evans, 2002, p. 262). This understanding indicates the diversity of agency rather than the uniformed 'modelling' form (Aaltonen, 2013; Bordonaro & Payne, 2012; Juvonen, 2014). Sub-studies II and III also take this relational understanding of young people's agency and extend this discussion by tracking their varying interplays with their families and educational contexts.

Emphasising young people's agency responds to Morgan's concept (1996) of 'doing family', which highlights social practices in a family (or family-like) setting rather the positions of family members. Focusing on the interplay between young people and their parents, this viewpoint enables a relational understanding of everyday family lives, such as parenting. It is consistent with a new lens of relational influence through which to investigate the child-parent relationship and its connection with education, rather than the single focus on parents. Kucynski and De Mol (2015) proposed this concept to understand the dynamics between parents and children, in which both of them 'construct new meanings from each other's verbal and nonverbal communication' (Kuczynski & De Mol, 2015, p. 46). Although only Sub-study II uses this framework for analysis, this idea of including both parents' involvement and young people's agency undergirds the whole discussion of child-parent relationships in this study. The relatedness between young people and their parents is central in all the sub-studies with the aim of decomposing and examining young people's processes of being and becoming.

3.3 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The relational perspective has become increasingly common in social scientific studies of youth and social work in the last few decades (Cuervo & Wyn, 2014; Esser, 2016; Folgheraiter, 2004; Kuczynski & De Mol, 2015; Mayall, 2009). Although a large body of work discusses the term 'relational', this study is built on relational sociology, which highlights social relations as primary. A series of contributors to relational sociology laid the theoretical foundation of this 'relational turn' in social science (Dépelteau, 2013), such as Mustafa Emirbayer, Ann Mische, Jan Fuhse, Pierpaolo Donati, Nick Crossley and, more recently, François Dépelteau and Christopher Powell.

The relational perspective theorises about the social world rather than the dominant substantialist viewpoints, which focuses on substances (substantial realities) (Emirbayer, 1997). The relational perspective, in contrast, considers social relations the primary units of analysis (Powell & Dépelteau, 2013). Social relations not only imply concrete connections but also 'relative positions in a field of some kind' (Powell, 2013, p. 189). In other words, social facts are embedded in the interdependences between individuals, which change in different spatial, historical and temporal contexts. Thereby, the relational perspective focuses on processes, interactions and changes (Emirbayer, 1997).

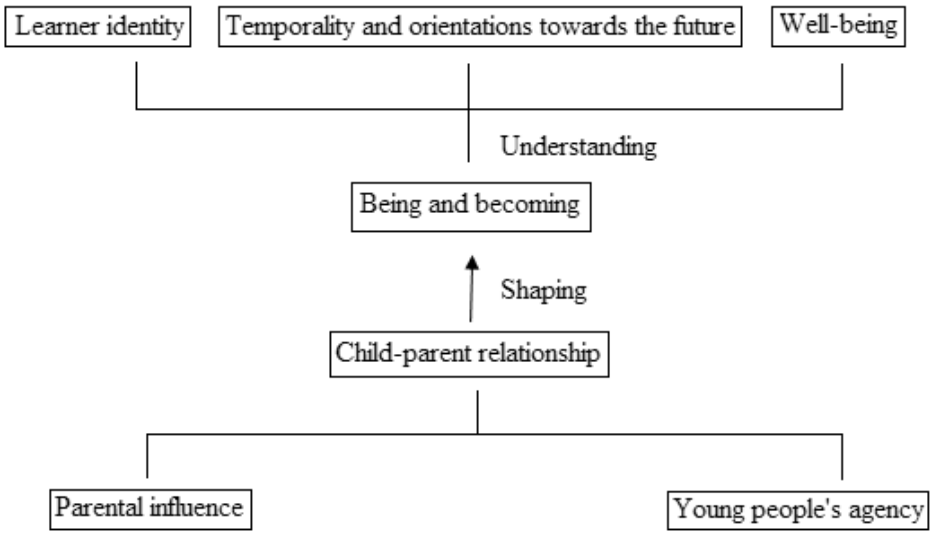
Ontologically, most relationists claim that only social relations constitute our social world (Donati, 2015; Emirbayer, 1997; Fish, 2013; Prandini, 2015). All individuals, institutions and structures network and interact with each other. When seeing the social world as constituted merely by flows of social relations without substantial formations, it is difficult to draw boundaries across these webs of dynamic relations (Emirbayer, 1997). Responding to this ontological challenge, Donati (2015; 2018) framed the relational perspective through the lens of critical realism. This 'relational realism' ontology considers both substance and relationality to be social realities: 'The nature of an entity cannot be reduced to relations and, vice versa, relations cannot be reduced to substances'(Donati, 2018, p. 436). Given this co-existence point of view, social relations as such are not the single concern; the agents (their behaviours and their changes) within this interdependence are also highlighted. This ontological view allows researchers to inquire into emergence and changes of social facts without negating pertinent subjects or dynamic social interdependence.

Epistemologically, the relational perspective concerns the knowledge of social relations. Many approaches to this knowledge exist, such as communication webs (Fuhse, 2018), social molecules (Donati, 2018) and social spaces (Crossley, 2015). The dispute, after the ontological differences, is whether social relations are the only reality to be studied. While most relationists believe in the existence of social relations rather than substances, for Donati's 'relational realism', substances and relations co-exist and are entangled. Thereby, the 'relational realism' has an interest in exploring individuals' actions, subjectivity and agency alongside the investigation of social relations as such (Donati & Archer, 2015). Sure enough, since 'society is made *by* individuals but is *not* made *of* individuals', the inquiry into individuals' actions is still through social relations (Donati, 2015, p. 5). Thereby, exploring the relational perspective offers a way to study how a given social fact 'emerges from the interdependence between the actors who are in relation in a certain spatial-temporal context; meanwhile, these actors alter their identity and their way of acting in relation to the interdependence between them'(Donati, 2018, p. 436).

Figure 1 illustrates how this study approaches the concept of being and becoming from a relational perspective. This approach highlights the role of social relations and pinpoints how specific ways of being and becoming are embedded in and shaped by particular social relations – in this case, the child-parent relationship. It aims to analyse the dynamics, nuances and processual interactions in the social process of living and growing up, focusing on two crucial fields of youth: education and family. First, the analysis presents how school-aged young people experience and make sense of the process of *being and becoming* situated in the context of school transition. This concept is understood along three theoretically valid dimensions: living well in the present and for the future (*well-being*), present- and future-oriented strategies to plan (*temporality* and *orientations towards future*) and identifying

one's identity and potential to become *(learner identity)*. Then, how this process takes place is examined from a relational perspective, focusing on the negotiations between young people and their parents. The analysis of this process is divided into *parental influences* and the *young people's agency* for analytical purposes, which is supported by the large, above-mentioned body of literature about family influence on education. Together, this framework reveals the nuances and dynamics of the complex processes of being and becoming.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework



4 STUDY DESIGN

This study includes both quantitative and qualitative research methods: a 'mixed-methods research' design. Such a design underlines the collaboration of qualitative and quantitative elements regarding viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques and so on (Chaumba, 2013; Greene, Kreider, & Mayer, 2005; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). This study examines young Chinese people's experiences of being and becoming in the arena of secondary education and how their negotiations are embedded in their child-parent relationships over time. Three sub-studies answer this overarching question about being and becoming from different angles: well-being, orientations towards the future and learner identity. Sub-study I paints a broad picture about the association between parents' social support and young people's well-being by quantitatively examining national survey data. Inspired by the weak (and lack of) connection between parental support and young people's educational well-being, Sub-studies II and III deeply explore the family-education nexus by qualitatively analysing the experience of the last-year students in one Chinese middle school. These qualitative analyses involve the other two themes of being and becoming through their two types of data, the individual interviews and the open-ended survey: orientations towards the future and learner identity, respectively.

This research design of mixing qualitative and quantitative sub-studies incorporates various conceptual underpinnings (Guest, 2013; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). All the sub-studies are oriented towards answering the overarching research question of being and becoming for young people through a range of concepts: well-being (Sub-studies I–III), orientations towards the future (Sub-study II), learner identity (Sub-study III) and the child-parent relationship (Sub-studies I–III). They complement each other to lay a foundation for the key concept of being and becoming. This design secondly develops and extends various methods (Chaumba, 2013; Greene et al., 2005). In the stage of data collection, for example, the interview sample (Sub-study III) is the subsamples derived from the open-ended question sample (Sub-study II). Different methods thus develop and inform each other. The mixed-method research design thirdly extends the breadth and range of the findings of the sub-studies (Greene et al., 2005). For instance, the quantitative finding of the weak (or no) association between parental support and young people's academic performance (Sub-study I) requires qualitative studies to elaborate on this atypicality. Qualitative studies (Sub-studies II and III) thereby explore young people's individual experiences during their transitions towards post-compulsory education from the perspectives of orientations towards the future and learner identification. All these findings were synthesised to disentangle the complexity of how the dimension of being is involved in the dimension of becoming for young people.

4.1 RESEARCH DATA

4.1.1 CHINA FAMILY PANEL STUDIES

China Family Panel Study (CFPS) is a nationally representative survey launched by Peking University to collect individual-, family- and community-level longitudinal data in contemporary China through five questionnaires: the community questionnaire, family roster questionnaire, adult questionnaire, family questionnaire and child questionnaire.[3] This study uses the 2012 data collected from the latter two (Peking University Open Research Data, 2019) . First, the child questionnaire includes a wide range of the participants' experiences, which Sub-study I explores, such as their parental social supports, health statuses, academic attainment, self-perceptions, depression, genders, ages and living locations. The family information of these participants was gathered from the family questionnaire data, including family income and family size.

The response rate of CFPS in 2012 was 85.1% at the household level and 80.6% at the individual level. Of the 8,620 child participants (0–15 years old), 3,056 were young people from 10–15 years old (48% girls). Since the participants who answered the parental social support questions were 11, 13 and 15 years old, the current study is also limited to these age groups (N=1541). The missing values were managed with the listwise-deletion method, whereby 235 cases were deleted. All these conditions yielded 1,306 cases (11, 13 and 15 years old, 47% girls, 61% in a rural area) for the analysis in total.

4.1.2 FIELD WORK IN A MIDDLE SCHOOL OF A TOWN IN HEBEI PROVINCE

When planning the qualitative data collection, I sought a place that could more or less represent the average level of the economic and educational situation in China. Hebei province has a population of over 74 million, with a per capita disposable income of urban households that ranked in the lower middle range in China in 2016 (National Data, 2020). The town in Hebei province this study selected has two primary schools, two middle schools, one academic high school and one vocational high school. The young people at the selected middle school can transition to any high school in Hebei province. In 2016, around half the young people who completed the middle school programme continued their education in academic high schools in urban areas, and most of the remaining half were enrolled in academic high schools in rural areas and vocational high schools. This acceptance rate for high schools was slightly lower than the national rate of 56% (MOE, 2017). Overall, the selected urban area has modest economic and educational resources compared to the national average.

Since the transition to post-compulsory education has a crucial impact on young people's educational and occupational futures (Tang, 2016), this period may provide an opportunity to uncover how young people re-negotiate their being and becoming with their parents.

[3] There are two child questionnaires. For the children who are younger than 10 years old, their parents answer their situations through the 'Adult proxy report'. The children between 10 and 16 years old answer the 'Child's self report' by themselves. The data of the latter one is used in the current study.

Therefore, the fieldwork was conducted in a public middle school in a town in Hebei province, with a focus on the last-year students.

The fieldwork lasted from the 10th of November to the 25th of December in 2016 (46 days). In the first three weeks, I gathered data on the family and school lives of all the final-year students (N=479) through an open-ended survey, a method that gives informants spaces to describe their experiences freely and allows researchers to access a large amount of sensitive information in a short time (Fielding, Fielding, Hughes, & Quantity, 2013; Popping, 2015). These characteristics were particularly beneficial for me, who intended to understand the participants' lives the first time I met them. Despite the form of the 'survey', the answers to open-ended questions can be used qualitatively. For example, in Virginia Morrow's work (2001) about using qualitative methods to study young people's perspectives on well-being, she selected the open-ended survey method ('essay writing', in her terms). The current study used this method in a similar way. Four major questions were offered to the participants, including about their school challenges, coping strategies, received and expected support from their school and families and their relationship histories with their parents.

The survey was conducted in the participants' classrooms. Before collecting data, I presented basic information about myself, the research background of this study, the significance of their participation and the basic research ethics. Each participant was given 45 minutes to complete the survey. I encouraged them to write freely about the proposed topics. When they had questions or difficulties understanding, I was always available to explain and clarify. Students with no idea how to answer the questions were allowed to write about their daily schedules. Most young people completed their answers within 45 minutes, while several female young people gave their answers back to me the next day.

Responses were received from 489 young people (90%). Ten were deleted because of empty answers to all the open-ended questions, unrecognisable handwriting, duplicate answers or irrelevant answers, finally yielding 479 cases to analyse. The number of boys (N=264) was slightly higher than that of girls (N=201). Most participants (96%) were 14–15 years old.

When collecting these data, I read through them and selected a sub-sample to study in-depth through individual interviews (see the sample selection process in the following page). The interview is a common method used to collect data in social science (Denzin, 2001). Interviews can 'provide a personal space for children or young people to voice their thoughts on an issue, share an experience, or reflect on an event'(Freeman & Mathison, 2009, p. 88). Accordingly, it is employed here to explore the experiences of young people in depth.

I developed the interview questions as I gathered the open-ended survey data. Initially, I planned to focus on their child-parent relationships, although I also had questions regarding their education. This design was based on the rich data of their educational lives from the open-ended survey. However, my attempts to separate the fields of family and education were frustrated by the interviews, so I gave more space to the interviewees to discuss the issues they would like to share rather than strictly following the interview questions (see Appendixes). Thanks to this strategy, I gathered rich material about the participants' encounters during their school transitions.

The interview participants (N=25) were recruited voluntarily. When conducting the open-ended survey, I asked the young people who would like to participate in the individual

interviews to confirm at the bottoms of their questionnaires [4]. Eighteen informants expressed their willingness to participate[5]. Six informants were removed either because they shared similar stories (regarding their parental styles and plans for school transitions) or because their parents did not consent to their participation. To maximise the extent to which the interview sub-sample would represent the diversity of the larger sample of 479, another 17 young people were invited who reported different parenting styles and transition plans than the 12 chosen participants. Four of the 17 young people did not participate due to sickness or their own or their parents' refusal to participate. In total, 25 young people were interviewed in Mandarin Chinese. Table 4 displays the basic information of the interviewees' family situations.

Table 4 Family situations of the interviewees (N=25)

Family situation	N
Parents' employment	
At least one parent having a professional job	9
No parent having a professional job	16
Primary caregiver	
Mother and father	15
Mother	9
Grandmother	1
Relationship participants mainly described	
Child-mother relationship	10
Child-father relationship	5
No distinguishing	10

The interviews were conducted in a conference room at the selected school. The participants chose the interview time schedule. Since I already had some of their information from their answers to the open-ended survey, each interview lasted only 20–40 minutes. Most interviewees were talkative and frank.

[4] Because of this research setting, the open-ended survey was not anonymous.

[5] The low interview acceptance may relate to the educational setting of the transition towards post-compulsory education, a stage in which young Chinese people primarily focus on improving their testing skills. Many of the young participants and their teachers were perhaps unwilling to devote time to participate in the fieldwork because they often consider any non-academic activity 'not useful' relative to the specific goal of achieving high marks on the upcoming *zhongkao*.

4.2 ANALYSES OF SUB-STUDIES

4.2.1 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics were examined by the Chi-square test (variables: health status, gender, age, living location, family income and family size) and one-way analysis of variance (variables: academic attainment, self-perception and depression). Logistic regression and multiple linear regression were used to analyse the association between (1) parental social support (including emotional and instrumental two types) and one indicator of young people's well-being (health status) and (2) the other three indicators (academic attainment, self-perception and depression). The results were further adjusted for age, gender, living location, family income and family size. The analysis was conducted using SPSS statistical software.

4.2.2 QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

Qualitative content analysis (QCA) aims to describe, interpret and identify categories, themes and patterns of data through coding (Assarroudi, Heshmati Nabavi, Armat, Ebadi, & Vaismoradi, 2018; Mayring, 2014). A distinctive feature of QCA is reducing data to core perspectives rather than describing 'the full meaning of your material in each and every respect'(Schreier, 2012, p. 4). This is the chief reason that I chose this method to analyse the interview data in this study. The interview data included many details of young people's family lives and school lives – 416 pages of interview transcripts. QCA allows this study to concentrate on a few perspectives that are the most relevant to the research question.

In particular, I followed the stepwise procedures QCA developed by Mayring[6] (2014). Consistent with the research question of Sub-study II, I concentrated on coding the transcripts regarding the histories, present and future of child-parent relationships and participants' plans for their educational futures. The main empirical categories, such as school-transition strategies and young people's agentic strategies, were generalised from the data, but this analysis by no means excluded concepts and theories. On the contrary, decisions about coding, categorising and classifying are theory-bounded. 'Technical fuzziness is compensated for by theoretical stringency', as Mayring (2014, p. 41) wrote. In Sub-study II, the concepts of social relational theory (Kuczynski & De Mol, 2015) and the focus of orientations towards the future (Woodman, 2011) re-framed these empirical categories on a more conceptual level. The same analysis loop continued for several rounds until the categories finally developed. Table 5 summarises the resulting web of concepts and categories.

Table 5 The coding book of the main categories in the qualitative content analysis

Concepts	Names of categories	Meaning

[6] Mayring describes a series of ways to conduct QCA. The one this study used is 'inductive category formation', the purpose of which is to select and analyse the data that are relevant to research questions.

Orientations towards the future	The first turning point of life	Young people's school-transition strategies, both present- and the future-centred perspectives
Agency, qualitative change, parenting style	Mixed agentic strategies	Young people's agentic strategies to influence their parents' educational involvement and (possibly) causes qualitative changes of their parents' parenting styles
Relationship context, agency	Reliable child-parent relationship context	Young people's interpretations of their experiences and expectations of their child-parent relationships as the resources and limits to their agency in families

4.2.3 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis (TA) aims to identify the salient themes in data (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). 'It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail'(Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). When gathering the open-ended survey data, I realised that the data were loosely connected under the topics of their school and family lives. To make sense of all the data, rather than considering only certain parts (as the QCA did), the TA method was used (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013), despite many similarities between these two methods (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019)

In particular, I employed the approach of 'thematic network'[7] developed by Attride-Stirling (2001), which concentrates on structuring themes, including basic themes, organising themes and global themes. This order also describes the hierarchy of these themes: *basic themes* are derived directly from the data; *organising themes* summarise the preliminary meaning of a group of basic themes; and *global themes* are the highest, 'encompass[ing] the principle metaphors in the data as a whole'(Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 389). This coding is non-linear but is 'a cyclical act' (Saldana, 2013, p. 8). It is a process that iterates between the 'cycles' of descriptively coding and conceptually coding.

Table 6 describes the 'thematic network' in Sub-study III. First, I generated a cluster of *basic themes*, such as such as school arrangements, learning strategies and parents' educational aspirations. This process was easy because the answers were divided according to the dimensions of the open-ended questions. I noticed that some words were frequently displayed, such as 'exams', 'grades' and 'competition'. Second, these basic themes were abstracted to the more conceptual level of *organising themes*. This attempt to break down the original structure of the survey questions was challenging. Here, the literature on young people's identification and Chinese learners in particular provided the conceptual tools to arrange the basic themes into four organising themes. Third, these organising themes were grouped into *global themes* framed by the theoretical lens of learner identification (Chappell

[7] Due to the requirement of the article length of the journal, I did not use these terms in Sub-study II. Instead, I chose more general terms, codes, categories and themes to represent basic themes, organising themes and global themes.

et al., 2003). These global themes encapsulate the interpretations of the whole data regarding the learner identities of young Chinese people.

Table 6 The network of the thematic analysis

Basic themes	Organising themes	Global themes
(New) school arrangements Peer culture	Subject position of exam-oriented self	Relational identification in school and at home
Child-parent interactions Parents' educational aspirations Expected parental support	Subject position of familial self	
Being informed by the rationality of survival and self-responsibility	Subject position of enterprising self	
Worries about exam results Competition pressure from peers Diligence strategy Imaginations of society	Learner identity of competitor	Reflexive identification

4.3 ETHICAL ISSUES

Mishna et al. (2004) suggested three principal ethical issues when conducting research with children in social work: consent and assent; protecting children from harm while respecting their rights; and ensuring that children have fair access to research initiatives and the benefits that ensue. I will briefly introduce how they were applied, operated or challenged in this study.

4.3.1 INFORMED CONSENT

All potential participants must be adequately informed about the research, such as the aim of the study, possible conflicts of interest and the institutional affiliations of the researchers (WMA, 1964–2013). A special feature of the studies of children and young people is that they are not deemed to have the (full) capability to give informed consent concerning themselves. As a result, both children and their parents commonly undersign the consent letters to decide whether to participate (Alderson & Morrow, 2011).

All the participants participated in this study voluntarily. The sample of the quantitative sub-study was derived from CFPS, which received ethical approval from the Peking University Biomedical Ethics Review Committee (Ma, Wang, & Liu, 2019). Each informant in the open-ended survey and interviews was provided an information letter that introduced the purpose of the survey, the requirements of the answers and the confidentiality of the survey responses verbally (see Appendix 2Appendix 2). In particular, I informed the interviewers that they had the right to stop the interviews if they did not want to continue. Since the open-ended survey was conducted as a part of their school activities, I also asked

for oral permission from the school and local educational bureau. The individual interviews received permission from the parents after receiving the consent of the young participants. The study also followed Finnish ethical standards[8] (TENK, 2009).

Guaranteeing the voluntariness of participation is a great challenge for studies involving children and young people (Mishna et al., 2004). Conducting studies in schools, for example, easily raises the question of imbalanced power between the young participants and the adult researchers (Morrow & Richards, 1996). I addressed this ethical challenge by stressing the participants' rights to withdraw when conducting the open-ended survey and interviews. I defined my role as a researcher and emphasised that I had no authority to evaluate or judge their choices and answers. Some participants were initially reluctant to take part in the interviews, but I contacted them to further explain the aim of the study and the value of their participation. I am aware that such persuasion risked violating the participants' autonomy and voluntariness, although it is an effective strategy to find and secure participants. Addressing this dilemma, I agree with Iphofen's suggestion (Iphofen, 2011, p. 61): It is acceptable as long as the participants did not '"feel" forced into compliance'. In my fieldwork, if the participants still said 'no' after my explanation, I respected their rejection. Altogether, 489 of all the 546 final-year students answered the open-ended questions, and 25 of these further participated in the individual interviews.

4.3.2 CONFIDENTIALITY, PRIVACY AND ANONYMITY

While accessing young people's experiences deepens our understanding of them, it may intrude on their privacy, so one must consider and plan research involving personal data in accordance with ethical principles. Since the statistical data are compliant with the Regulation on the Implementation of the Statistics Law of the People's Republic of China (Peking University Open Research Data, 2019), I do not elaborate on the ethics of data confidentiality here. The planning, collecting, analysing and publishing of the interviews and open-ended answers have also followed Finnish ethical guidance to protect individuals' privacy (TENK, 2009). I informed the participants (and their parents in the individual interviews) how I was planning to process their personal data, and I was the only data controller who was responsible for and had access to the raw data. Moreover, during the analysis, although I have kept the participants' names in the data to link to their gender information gathered after the fieldwork, in publishing the research results, the data identifiers, including the names of the participants, their schools and their living places, have been removed. I have stored their open-ended answers (paper reports) at my home. The transcripts (and audio recodes) of the interviews and the open-ended answers are stored in a computer that can only be accessed using my own password. The data will be destroyed permanently after carrying out the whole study to maintain data confidentiality.

Data anonymity, however, does not fully protect the privacy of participants. Their individual experiences may still be identifiable by their parents, peers and teachers (Alderson & Morrow, 2011; Peled & Leichtentritt, 2002). In this study, the research questions were highly personal, making the extent of potential exposure greater than I had

[8] I am aware of the latest ethical principles for research in human sciences (TENK, 2019), but they were not in force during my field work. Therefore, this thesis still follows the older ethical standards.

anticipated (Mishna et al., 2004). Some young people openly wrote and discussed their family stories, such as their relationships with their stepparents, the deaths of their parents, their violations of school rules and their personal struggles. These data were sometimes not directly relevant to the thesis, but I attempted to respect how comfortable the participants felt in participating (Phelan & Kinsella, 2013). A good example of respecting the participants is illustrated by one boy's case. In the interview, he spoke about his relationship with his mother dramatically changing during the last year of primary school because of 'one thing'. I asked what this 'thing' was. He started to cry. I stopped talking and offered him a cup of water and tissue. When he calmed down, I asked whether we still could continue the interview. He agreed but declined to share this story with me. Although I lost a piece of potentially important data, it is ethical to follow participants' willingness to keep their private, emotional issues confidential.

4.3.3 ENSURING PARTICIPANTS' VOICES AND BENEFITS

When including children and young people in research, an important ethical consideration is that the potential benefits are bigger than the potential risks (WMA, 1964–2013). Social work studies (Peled & Leichtentritt, 2002) and studies of children and young people (Mishna et al., 2004) commonly consider 'giving voice to' young participants as beneficial for them (James, 2007). I also mentioned this potential benefit to encourage the young people to participate when introducing this study to them (Phelan & Kinsella, 2013). The frank, open accounts the participants provided indicated certain levels of agreement about the benefits of research participation.

The clarification and negotiation not only involved benefits, of course, but also potential risks. The potential harm primarily relates to the disclosure of their individual histories and the consequent emotional turbulence. My strategy was to let the participants decide the extent to which they shared their personal information with me (Peled & Leichtentritt, 2002). At the end of each interview, I also always asked the participants how they felt and whether the interview had caused discomfort. All the participants responded that they were well or not bad, and some participants even said the interviews helped them release their stresses and negative emotions. These strategies demonstrate my efforts to build open dialogues with the participants, which are common in ethical research with children and young people (James, 2007; Mishna et al., 2004; Peled & Leichtentritt, 2002; Phelan & Kinsella, 2013).

5 SYNTHESIS OF THE SUB-STUDIES

This section presents the main findings of the sub-studies and their academic significance. Table 7 presents the preliminary conceptual perspectives and the related findings of the sub-studies. Consistent with the research question and the conceptual framework, these findings are synthesised and re-constructed in two parts. First, the findings about well-being, orientations towards the future and learner identity are integrated to discuss being and becoming for the investigated young Chinese people in the arena of secondary education. Thereafter, the discussion turns to how these experiences are relationally formed and shaped in their families, grounded by the findings of the sub-studies about the relational influence between young people and their parents in their education. The details about parents' educational involvement and young people's agency together complete the picture of the relational effects of the child-parent relationship on being and becoming for young people.

Table 7 Conceptual perspectives and main findings of the sub-studies

Conceptual perspectives	Findings
Well-being	(1) Educational success was a main representation of the 'good life' that will mainly be achieved in the future (Sub-studies II and III). (2) Young people struggled with their present well-being when pursing long-term goals (Sub-studies II and III).
Orientations towards the future	(1) Young people commonly accepted the socially favoured way of planning for the future and strived for a position in academic high schools (Sub-study II). (2) A small group showed uncertain orientations towards their future (Sub-study II).
Learner identity	(1) Young people were offered the subject positions of enterprising self, exam-oriented self and familial self by their families and schools (Sub-study III). (2) Young people mediated these available subject positions to construct their learner identities around the theme of competition (Sub-study III).
Relational influences between young people and parents	(1) Parents' social supports (instrumental and emotional dimensions) were associated with young people's well-being in terms of improving their academic attainment, improving their self-perception and reducing their depression (Sub-study I). (2) Parents were actively involved in young people's school transitions through a series of strategies, such as guidance, supervision, nagging and aspiration (Sub-studies II and III). (3) Young people variedly exercised their agency to resist, adjust and negotiate with their parents' educational influence (Sub-studies II and III).

(4) Young people's agency was embedded in (and led the changes in) their child-parent relationships (Sub-studies II and III).

5.1 FUTURE- AND PRESENT-ORIENTED WAYS OF BEING AND BECOMING

As young British people, who are 'far from seeing the future as simply "an extended present"' (Anderson et al., 2005, p. 139), the young Chinese people in this study intensively planned for their becoming future. Education and employment are the two fundamental issues for many young Chinese people. Brannen and Nilsen (2002) found that the British-Asian young people's experience of temporality is future-oriented. In their words, their future is 'predictable' because they have outlined their futures and firmly followed their long-term goals. Likewise, many participants in the current study imagined their futures as successfully transitioning to post-compulsory education and later to employment. In this sense, their paths into adulthood follow the demands of educational institutions (continuing education) and the labour market (credentialism). Persisting with this kind of future does not mean that these young people considered their life courses guaranteed, of course; their accounts included expressions such as 'worry', 'not sure' and 'feel stressful', demonstrating their uncertainties. Here, the feeling of uncertainty about the future is not exactly the same as its interpretations of the greater variety of life pathways among Western young people (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Leccardi, 2005). The uncertainties these young Chinese people displayed concentrated on worries about the chances of reaching and maintaining the above-mentioned academic path. This is a commonly accepted life-path to secure economic and social status in their future (Kim et al., 2016; Wu, 2017). Its clear privilege motivates and limits young Chinese people to follow this uniform goal without considering alternatives (A. B. Kipnis, 2011; Zhao, 2015).

Meanwhile, the participants implemented many strategies and efforts in their present lives to secure their plans for successful school transitions. Without any doubt, learning strategies to improve academic performance were the most frequently invoked, such as extending learning time, diligence and repetitive practices. Moreover, young people collected the recruiting information of different high schools, resorted to 'shortcuts' to increase their chances of attending certain high schools and calculated their families' financial situations to support their private tutoring. Evidently, these practices in the present were oriented by their plans for the future. These experiences highlight the continuity of temporality (Leccardi, 2005), which means that time is 'a forward movement where the past is relived in the present, putting its marks on the future in ways that may be detected only retrospectively'(Nielsen, 2016, p. 7). The ways and rationales of how temporality dimensions intersect with each other are expressed as individuals' temporality strategies. For most of the participants, the priority of future educational success was their strategy to guide their organisations of their present lives and their imaginations of their futures. Consistent with the future-oriented planning of their futures, young Chinese people also re-formed their learner identities around the theme of competition. This concept is increasingly mentioned in studies of enterprising subjects and seems to be a new characteristic of neoliberal education (Keddie, 2016; Wilkins, 2012). The enterprising position also played an important

role in the examined young Chinese people's identifications, but it was also engaged with other subject positions (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003), such as the exam-oriented self, familial self and free and happy self. Such a multiplicity of identity formation challenges the fashion of attributing the competitor identity only to neoliberal education. Recognising these new features is also related to understanding identity as an ever-changing process (Hopkins, 2010; Lawler, 2014). During childhood and youth, the last year of middle school seems to be a 'critical moment' (Thomson et al., 2002) for young Chinese people to change from an easy-going to a competitive self. This view not only pinpoints the dynamics of identity formation but also points to the changes of being and becoming for young people over time (McLeod & Yates, 2006, p. 77; Worth, 2009). Thereby, this finding about the newly formed 'competitor' identity suggests the central position of future success in these young people's negotiation processes of being and becoming in the educational context.

The priority of the future also penetrated through the young people's accounts of how to be and become well, although the concept 'well-being' was not used in the analysis of Sub-studies II or III. The discussion of having a good life was often on how to transition 'successfully' towards adulthood. The participants aspired to stable futures with decent incomes that could create financial adequacy for themselves and for their families. Such an aspiration was linked to the awareness of the precarious employment situation and the tradition of seeing education as a main tool to increase the chances of upward mobility (Kim et al., 2016; Mok & Wu, 2016; Wu, 2017; Yue & Zhou, 2019). In this sense, their interpretation of well-being was future-oriented, that is, well-becoming. This considerable focus on becoming well for the future corresponds to the call to keep an open mind to understand well-being (Björk Eydal & Satka, 2006; Kamerman & Gatenio-Gabel, 2014). Although the academic discussion highlights positioning children and young people in their own life phrases, it is clear that they always have an eye on their futures in their everyday lives (Cassidy, 2017; Prout, 2005; Uprichard, 2008).

Up to this point, this study has heightened the future-oriented way of being and becoming for the young Chinese people, but it was definitely not the only orientation. Some young people primarily focussed on the present. This present-oriented way of being and becoming is evinced in the accounts of a group of young people who pursued vocational education in Sub-studies II and III. This group of young people experienced the 'cyclical ways of life' which is filled with a repetition of leisure activities (Nowotny, 1994, p. 58), the accounts of which are mainly brought out in Sub-study III. Whereas Leccardi (2005, p. 133) argued that such a biographical construction refers to 'a vacuous present devoid of temporal depth', the participants in this study still expressed their consideration of the future but differently from those who prioritised long-term planning. Most loosely imagined their pathways towards vocational education with hesitation and uncertainty due to the disvalue of this choice in public. Vocational education is deeply entangled with the problems of lower status and income of vocational graduates in the labour market, the schools' poor teaching quality and their curriculums' non-practical knowledge (Hansen & Woronov, 2013; Kim et al., 2016). Although some young people seemed to choose this pathway themselves, it was not a real choice (Vieira et al., 2013). '"Choice" becomes an absence of choice, a filtering out of alternatives' (Ball et al., 2000, p. 151). They were uncertain about what awaited them in the future when rejecting or being rejected by the publicly favoured pathway. Therefore, they mainly expressed their interest in having fun and being happy in the present.

The focus on the present also caused conflicts during the young Chinese people's negotiations of being and becoming, which was evident in their learner-identity formation (Sub-study III). When the young people sought to compete for successful school transitions, they also struggled with feelings of being depressed, anxious and constrained for such a quest. Most participants attempted to live with this incompatibility between present situations and future imaginations by identifying themselves with the theme of competition. A small group, which possibly overlapped with the group who pursued vocational education, chose a free, happy way of being over the anxious hunt of successful becoming. This finding challenges the simplistic perspective of young Chinese people as rationally planning their futures and following the labour-market requirement of constant upskilling (Zhao & Deng, 2016). These participants verified the phenomenon that Ball described: 'a clash of priorities'(Ball et al., 2000, p. 146). Education and employment were not priorities for them. Instead, entertaining and socialising were mostly relevant to them. These deviations illustrate the necessity to keep an open mind to young peoples' navigations of the process of being and becoming, as they have varied ways to 'negotiate and balance a range of personal, occupational and educational commitments in their lives'(Wyn & Dwyer, 1999, p. 7).

These young Chinese people also showed deep worries about their present well-being rather than about becoming successful in the future. In Sub-study III, 86 informants directly reported feelings of depression and anxiety, and more young people implicitly discussed the suffering of negative emotions and the damage to their physical health (e.g. lack of sleep). Similarly, according to a national representative survey (Chen, Yang, & Ren, 2015), 21% of young Chinese people have depression symptoms more than two times a week, and 20% do not feel happy. Through the abundant accounts of the needs to be encouraged, understood, trusted, given more respect and being happy, the Chinese participants laid claims to their right of well-being (Kamerman & Gatenio-Gabel, 2014, p. 405). Their conceptualisation of how to live well underlined the emotional needs among the rights the CRC outlined for children and young people (Björk Eydal & Satka, 2006). The desire of being well in the present played an important role in driving these young people to reflect and even resist the socially favoured long-term goal of a successful future in the process of being and becoming.

5.2 RELATIONALLY SHAPING BEING AND BECOMING IN THE CHILD-PARENT RELATIONSHIP

5.2.1 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S EDUCATION

Although rapid societal changes, such as the prevalence of individual responsibilities and the expansion of social services, may weaken family solidarity, Mayall (2009) asserted that children's dependence on their parents and their parents' responsibilities for them continue. This interdependence between young people and their parents resonates with the 'person-in-situation' conceptualisation in social work (Harrikari & Rauhala, 2018; Sharland, 2005). It is an intention to understand young people from the inextricable interplay between them and their immediate social environments.

The transition to post-compulsory education provides a window to manifest the necessity of parents' involvement in the process of being and becoming for young people. A European study found that parents not only care for young people's general well-being but

also play the role of 'way-keeper' in young people's educational decision-making (Amaral, Cuconato, Dale, & Walther, 2016). Likewise, the participants illustrated that much of their parents' supporting acts aimed at higher academic performance and academic high schools: providing information, experience and resources; calculating different educational policies and employment requirements; guaranteeing young people's learning time; financing private tutoring; solving young people's learning difficulties; and providing day-to-day care (Sub-studies II and III). Compared to their European counterparts, who receive extensive professional support at this turning point (Aro, Julkunen, & Treptow, 2013), parents are the primary if not the only support young Chinese people have. Thus, it is not surprising to find that most participants shared the future-oriented way of being and becoming promoted by many of their parents.

Young people also underline their parents' engagements when identifying who they are and who they will become. Social relations with significant others 'have an accentuated role in the formation of the self' (Ketokivi, 2010, p. 130). We can find the roots of this argument in Cooley's conceptualisation of the self (1922). Cooley's well-known concept of the 'looking-glass self' claims that individuals create types of self-feeling through 'the imaginations of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgement of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification' (Cooley, 1922, p. 184). Concerns about others' perceptions of us are much more explicit in relation to significant others, and in these interactions, the experience of the self has a strong emotional component. As Sub-study III confirmed, some participants may well have accepted their parents' definition of a 'good learner'. Such an acceptance is mostly built on the trustful, reciprocal relationships between them and their parents. As Ketokivi (2010, p. 30) argued, '[W]e do not protect ourselves from those we love but rather take them within ourselves' (see also Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). Relationships with parents provide important resources for young people to clarify who they are and would like to become, and in turn, this process of identification is committed to maintaining their bonding and sense of belonging with their parents.

Parents as supporters and children as being supported is probably the most common description of this relation in social work (Alameda-Lawson et al., 2010; Featherstone et al., 2014). It has been manifested that supportive parenting creates security, increases resilience and reduces risks for children and young people (McGrath et al., 2014; Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007; Sulimani-Aidan, 2019; Woodman & McArthur, 2017). Likewise, this study demonstrates these securing and buffering roles of parents through its connection with the varied dimensions of well-being of young Chinese people. Sub-study I found that both intermediate and high levels of emotional support were associated with better self-perception and lower levels of depression, and these associations were also reflected at a high level of instrumental support. In addition, a high level of emotional support was associated with higher academic attainment. These associations remained after controlling for socio-demographic characteristics, including age, gender, living location, family income and family size.

An interesting finding is that emotional support seems to work better than instrumental support relative to improving young people's academic performance (Sub-study I). This result confirms the changes in Chinese parenting, which increasingly emphasises emotional connections between generations (Chen & Chen, 2010; Way et al., 2013). The abundant qualitative accounts of the young Chinese people in this study also illustrated their parents' emotional support, such as being patient, encouraging, gentle and reasonable (Sub-studies

II and III). Prioritising children's emotions and feelings was not the goal of most Chinese parents 20 years ago (Chao & Tseng, 2002) but a concern largely associated with Western families. The Chinese families examined in this study had clearly taken on the project of integrating Chinese interdependent family values and Western independent developmental goals (Cheah et al., 2013; Qi, 2016; Wang, Pomerantz, & Chen, 2007).

However, the qualitative results of Sub-studies II and III give a different picture. Many young people complained about the increasing conflicts and emotional distance between them and their parents during their school transitions. A national representative study in 2015 also argued that the authoritarian style of parenting (stressing parents' great demands) was still more common than the authoritative style (stressing parents' warmth and support) in the Chinese families of middle school students (Yang & Zhao, 2020). This seeming contradiction can be explained by a close look at the accounts in this study. Most negative feelings about the child-parent relationship were projected onto education, while the participants received their parents' care and love in other family contexts. These different perceptions of the child-parent relationship are entangled. The affections in their family histories and the longing for such bonding in their futures play roles in encouraging young people to trust and include their parents in their education (Sub-study II).

These mixed practices correspond to the double meaning of the concept of *guan* (to govern and to love) that is commonly used to express parenting in Chinese families (Chao, 1994; Chen-Bouck, Duan, & Patterson, 2017; Wu, 2013). Tobin et al. (2009) observed that this perspective of love and care has been much more (or even overly) highlighted in Chinese families since the turn of the millennium. Particularly after the implementation of the one-child policy, there has been a paradox of high parental demands to ensure that their only children have promising futures and growing love to respect those children's interests (Fong, 2004; Ngan-ling Chow & Zhao, 1996). The concealed practices of caring and concern shed new light on these seemingly demanding parenting practices on children's education in China (Byun et al., 2012; Liu & Xie, 2015).

In contrast to the stereotype of Chinese parents who are deeply involved in their children's education, not all the parents in this study were engaged in their young people's education. Both Sub-studies II and III found young people who barely received their parents' involvement or who refused to categorise their involvement as supportive. Parents' social classes played crucial roles in this differentiation of their practices. Sheng (2014a) noticed a growing participation of middle-class fathers in supporting their children's education, as this study does (Sub-study II). These middle-class fathers not only use their social connections to investigate the pros and cons of varied educational programmes but also reasonably negotiate with young people to achieve agreements about young people's futures. In contrast, the working-class parents had little knowledge about how to be involved in young people's education other than general reminding or 'nagging', as the participants described, about completing homework or working hard. These young people could mostly rely on themselves (Wang & Anderson, 2014). Such a disadvantage is particularly explicit since family is the main support for most young Chinese people. Children and young people from lower socio-economic-status families thus have difficulties attending universities, particularly the top-tier ones (Tang, 2016; Wu, 2017).

5.2.2 YOUNG PEOPLE'S AGENCY IN RE-SHAPING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The involvement of child-parent relationships in young people's education is not determined by parents alone. Sub-study II empirically illustrates how the young Chinese people actively exercised their agency to mediate their parents' educational involvement. The performance of resistance, modification and negotiation are the key features of exercising agency (Coffey & Farrugia, 2014; James & Prout, 2015; Parkin & Kuczynski, 2012; White & Wyn, 1998). Sub-study III also provides evidence of young people's agency through the experience of learner-identity formation. The examined young people actively shaped the subject positions provided by their schools and their families and added new subject positions when forming their learner identities, something called 'reflexive identification' (Chappell et al., 2003). Such creative modification and negotiation manifest young people's capabilities to shape who they are and who they will be.

These findings prove that many non-Western children and young people can also exercise their agency (Mayall, 2015; Punch, 2016). They play a key but often neglected role in the latest changes in Chinese parenting (Qi, 2016; Wang, 2014; Way et al., 2013). The accounts of young people's agency demonstrate their endeavours to defend their own interests in their navigations of being and becoming. As a result, the extent to which young Chinese people's educational biographies are results of parents' pushing must be reconsidered (Francis, Mau, & Archer, 2017). The highlighted young people's voices correspond to the above-mentioned ambiguities and tensions in the process of being and becoming, as they are a negotiation between young people, their families and schools rather than their obedience to these institutions. The transition to post-compulsory education seems to be a critical moment for young Chinese people to shift their relationships to a mutual, reciprocal, adult-like structure. Thereby, this experience of being and becoming during the school transition illustrates how young people balance commitments to others and themselves in their lives (Mayall, 2015; Wyn & Dwyer, 1999).

Notably, the participants exercised their agency in diverse ways, as Table 8 shows. Maccboy and Martin's frame of parenting styles (1983) were used to categorise the participants' interpretations of their child-parent relationships. Sub-study II proposes three kinds of young people's agency corresponding to three parenting styles in which they are embedded. First, young people (indirectly) resisted parents conducting authoritarian parenting practices. Second, young people chose to negotiate disagreements and modify suggestions with authoritative parents. Third, young people felt powerless to influence their parents when they had neglectful and authoritarian parenting styles. Sub-study III verified these categories.

Table 8 Forms of agency and related parenting styles

Forms of agency	Parenting style
(Indirect) resistance	Authoritarian parenting
Negotiation and modification	Authoritative parenting
Powerlessness to influence	Neglecting and authoritarian parenting

Discovering these multiple types of agency shows the value of approaching agency from a relational perspective (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007). In this, young people's agency is not free but is 'bounded' by their varied interpretations of intergenerational relations (Behrens & Evans, 2002; Kuczynski & De Mol, 2015). Each form of agency corresponds to a child-parent relationship pattern, and this relationship context gives the social meanings of agency. Moreover, relationship contexts are temporal. Young people's interpretations of their child-parent relationships are attuned by present practices, past experiences and future imaginations (Kuczynski & De Mol, 2015; Qvortrup, 2009). These young people commonly experienced positive family histories and the longing to care for their parents in the future. Thus, most young people did not choose to reject their parents' involvement but to maintain their relationships with adjustments and changes.

This evidence that young Chinese people's agency is bounded in their child-parent relationship contexts also helps to re-envision the topical discussion on the link between parents' high academic aspirations and children's excellent academic performance (Fuligni & Zhang, 2004; Fuligni, 2001; Pomerantz, Qin, Wang, & Chen, 2011; Tao & Hong, 2014). This link has primarily been explained by the Confucian ethic of filial piety (Fuligni & Zhang, 2004; Liu, 2008; Tu, 1985), which claims that many young Chinese people consider high academic performance a way to fulfil their family responsibilities, a key one of which is to make their parents happy. In Sub-studies II and III, many participants experienced their parents' improved attitudes when satisfying their academic aspirations and vice versa. Identifying such a pattern of parental practices tentatively leads these young people to obey the traditional obligation to maintain a happy family atmosphere. For young people who accepted or even enforced this family obligation, a principal point that has hardly been discussed is the embedded relationship context. When the young people sensed their parents' care and provision of good living conditions over time, they exercised their agency to satisfy their parents' aspirations for their education. Again, the long-term family bonding relationally grounds young people's agency, so taking this relational perspective provides a more complicated picture of how families motivate young Chinese people to pursue educational success.

6 DISCUSSION

This study explores being and becoming for young Chinese people in an educational setting with a focus on the embedded child-parent relationship. This exploration has been framed by a relational perspective through two groups of concepts: being and becoming (temporality, well-being, learner identity and orientations towards the future) and the child-parent relationship (parental involvement, agency and relational influences). By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, this study analyses young people's experiences of being and becoming and the relational effect of the child-parent relationship in shaping these experiences.

6.1 MAIN FINDINGS

This study makes three main findings. First, this study shows the multiplicity of being and becoming for young Chinese people. Whereas most of the studied young Chinese people selected a future-oriented strategy to strive for successful transitions towards the favoured academic path, a few exhibited difficulty following this path but focussed heavily on their present happiness, entertainment and socialising. Second, their parents were deeply engaged in their social processes of living and growing up as young Chinese people during their secondary education. In particular, their parents' emotional support inside and outside the field of education was highlighted as improving their well-being and coping with school transitions, mixed with the demands and conflicts in their relationships. Third, the examined young people also exercised their agency to shape their parents' involvement. Young people's agency was varied, relationally embedded in the diverse accumulation of past, present and future family episodes.

6.2 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study suggests that the concept of being and becoming corresponds well to the recent call for adding temporality as a dimension to the investigation of youth (Leccardi, 2005; McLeod, 2014, 2017; Woodman, 2011; Woodman & Leccardi, 2015). This concept is defined to investigate the social aspects of young people over time. It has two distinct advantages. First, this concept fleshes out temporality without neglecting the social. Here, temporality is not an extra research object but blends in and speaks to other individual experiences. The studies of young people's social lives, such as well-being, future planning and identification, often refer to this concept to address the inevitable impact of time on young people's living and growing up, although it is seldom the focus of analysis. It is thus a promising concept with which to network these various concepts when studying youth in a time-rich way. Second, this concept heightens the relationship between the present and the future. Prioritising one form of temporality over another often happens in studies involving temporality. Here, I agree with Leccardi (2005, 2014), who highlighted the interactions of different temporal dimensions (i.e. the present and future) in individuals' lived experiences.

Attending to the breadth of temporality offers a wider lens into individuals' choices and experiences. The concept of being and becoming is thus advanced to underline the unavoidable entanglement of the present and future, and it has the potential to become a new strategy to analyse the social lives of youth.

This study also demonstrates the value of employing a relational perspective in approaching youth (Donati, 2015; Emirbayer, 1997). A relational perspective helps this study uncover the social processes of how young people are and how will they grow up on a micro-level (families). Rich details of how young people and their parents interact, challenge and negotiate with each other as social agents have been made visible. Such an analysis contributes to the literature on temporality by offering a valuable approach rather than simply adding new categories of temporal experience. It is an examination of the processes, dynamics and 'messiness' of the emergence and changes of temporalities. This approach does not abandon existing discussions about youth but demonstrates its potential to re-interpret well-established concepts, such as temporality, agency and learner identity, in a relational sense. Thereby, the relational perspective is much more than a focus on analysing social relations as such but a useful approach to uncover the complicated processes of youth.

Although this study's sample cannot be generalised to represent all young Chinese people, its rich data, valid analysis and adequate conceptualisation enhance the potential of transferability. This inquiry into young Chinese people' experiences of being and becoming is grounded in the extensive empirical data on their well-being, orientations towards the future, learner identity and child-parent relationships. This detailed investigation recommends re-envisioning Chinese youth and disputes the common image of obedient young Chinese people by revealing their attempts to defend their own interests and mediate their parents' engagements in their negotiations with education and society. It is an attempt to show the catalyst for a new understanding and experience of growing up in this generation. Not all young people navigate their life trajectories as educational policies and programmes intend them to. This study retains and reflects the specifics and complexities of these young people's living and growing up in temporal, historical and relational senses. This strong empirical evidence offers new ways to understand how today's young Chinese people are in the present and will become in the future.

This inquiry into the individual experiences of today's young people and their interactions with their surroundings highlights 'the social' in social work studies (Harrikari & Rauhala, 2018; Kam, 2014). 'Is this a social work study?' has frequently been asked ever since I started this doctoral thesis. This question relates to the definition of social work. Because of the deep entanglement of scientific discipline and professional practice, social work research is more easily associated with the studies of social work practices. An exclusive focus on social services as such constrains the vision of social work, however, ignoring the fundamental interest in social context and social changes (Satka, 2016). Social work is required to include and respond to (new) social conditions since it has been created. This motif is central to the social work pioneer Mary Richmond in relation to the concept of 'person-in-situation', which this research employed. 'Social work, in all its aspects, is an activity which is social in nature. Even the most individual-oriented forms of social work cannot distinguish and remove individuals from their social relationships and environments' (Harrikari & Rauhala, 2018, p. 8). It requires an awareness and analysis of the social contexts and social changes in which individuals are situated. This study responds to such an understanding of social work and attends to young Chinese people's negotiations with

their families, schools and societies. This focus on the social also relates to struggles against oppression and striving for social equality and justice (Kam, 2014; Mullaly & Mullaly, 2007). The investigation of young people's points of view shares a similar goal of challenging adults' dominance over how to understand and structure growing-up, families and education in current social policies and social services for youth. Amplifying the voices of young people is an important step towards the goal of social work of '[promoting] social change and development, social cohesion and the empowerment and liberation of people' (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014). Researching this ever-changing social group is thereby necessary for social work with youth in relation to identifying the structural and relational obstacles for young people and launching social support programmes towards social justice and social cohesion.

6.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The great involvement of Chinese parents in young people's school transitions implies the under-development of social welfare for young people. While the welfare system in China has rapidly expanded in recent decades, social support for children and young people is still limited. One recent review of social services with youth in China found that the services seem to cover many parts of young people's lives but hardly address them in depth (Resilience Research Centre, 2020). According to a typology of formal support related to school (Aro et al., 2013), the social support provided for young Chinese people is mainly 'directed' at learning, and most support targets 'vulnerable' groups, such as migrant children (Lu, 2015).

One reason for such constrained professional support for young people is the failure to identify their needs and demands, a problem to which this study partly contributes. According to the young people's experiences in this study, the government should provide social services for educational and career guidance. Across European countries, such services systematically support young people to go through educational decision-making processes supported by individual counselling and long-term career curriculums (Felczak & Julkunen, 2016). These social services integrate into school teaching with the specific purpose of supporting young people to shape their educational and career plans. The need for educational and career support is related to societal changes in China regarding the impact of credentialism, increasing educational years, varied educational programmes and occupations and growing social inequalities. The experiences of the examined young people justify this necessity by revealing their struggles in organising their educational pathways. Social work and social welfare play crucial roles in supporting young people to cope with such a complicated process that is full of risks, struggles and precarity (Julkunen & Rauhala, 2013). This thesis stresses the significance of social work with youth in the current reform of the Chinese social welfare system.

Highlighting the relational perspective also points out the emerging trend of relational social work in practice (Donati, 2017; Folgheraiter, 2004; Folgheraiter & Raineri, 2012). Relational social work emphasises understanding and coping with 'social problems' in a relational way. In this, social workers are required to be aware of social networks and consider them in professional processes: observing and intervening relationally. Folgheraiter (2004) suggested that social workers observe their clients through a 'coping network', where not only each single client but also the social relations in which each client

is situated are included. When providing professional services, therefore, social workers provide 'relational guidance' to detect and intervene in the relational influences on individuals from their families, schools, workplaces, communities, social organisations and societies. Social workers may intervene in such a network's 'intrinsic movement' (Folgheraiter, 2004, p. 175), such as young people's relationships with their parents and schools, rather than simply and passively 'empowering' young people. This approach highlights the significance of the social when providing social services and shaping opportunity structures for young people. This focus gives a context-sensitive point of view into social work with youth, and it is particularly crucial for Chinese social work to establish its independence and uniqueness from Western-based service programmes.

7 REFERENCES

Aaltonen, S. (2013). 'Trying to Push Things Through': Forms and Bounds of Agency in Transitions of School-Age Young People. *Journal of Youth Studies, 16*(3), 375-390

Alameda-Lawson, T., Lawson, M. A., & Lawson, H. A. (2010). Social Workers' Roles in Facilitating the Collective Involvement of Low-Income, Culturally Diverse Parents in an Elementary School. *Children & Schools, 32*(3), 172-182

Alderson, P., & Morrow, V. (2011). *The Ethics of Research with Children and Young People: A Practical Handbook*. London: Sage.

Amaral, M. P. d., Cuconato, M., Dale, R., & Walther, A. (2016). *Governance of Educational Trajectories in Europe : Pathways, Policy and Practice*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Anderson, M., Bechhofer, F., McCrone, D., Jamieson, L., Li, Y., & Stewart, R. (2005). Timespans and Plans among Young Adults. *Sociology-the Journal of the British Sociological Association, 39*(1), 139-155

Ansell, N., Hajdu, F., van Blerk, L., & Robson, E. (2014). Reconceptualising Temporality in Young Lives: Exploring Young People's Current and Future Livelihoods in Aids-Affected Southern Africa. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 39*(3), 387-401

Aro, M., Julkunen, I., & Treptow, R. (2013). Formal Support for Students. In H. K. Altinyelken & I. Julkunen (Eds.), *Coping and Support in Educational Transitions. (Goete Working Paper)* (pp. 72-90). Helsinki: University of Helsinki, University of Amsterdam.

Assarroudi, A., Heshmati Nabavi, F., Armat, M. R., Ebadi, A., & Vaismoradi, M. (2018). Directed Qualitative Content Analysis: The Description and Elaboration of Its Underpinning Methods and Data Analysis Process. *Journal of Research in Nursing, 23*(1), 42-55

Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic Networks: An Analytic Tool for Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Research, 1*(3), 385-405

Aunola, K., Stattin, H., & Nurmi, J. E. (2000). Parenting Styles and Adolescents' Achievement Strategies. *J Adolesc, 23*(2), 205-222

Bahr, S. J., & Hoffmann, J. P. (2010). Parenting Style, Religiosity, Peers, and Adolescent Heavy Drinking. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and drugs, 71*(4), 539-543

Ball, S., Maguire, M., & Macrae, S. (2000). *Choice, Pathways and Transitions Post-16: New Youth, New Economies in the Globle City*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Barbalet, J. (2016). Chinese Individualization, Revisited. *Journal of Sociology, 52*(1), 9-23

Baumrind, D. (1967). Child Care Practices Anteceding Three Patterns of Preschool Behavior. *Genetic psychology monographs, 75*(1), 43-88

Behrens, M., & Evans, K. (2002). Taking Control of Their Lives? Agency in Young Adult Transitions in England and the New Germany. *Journal of Youth Studies, 5*(3), 245-269

Ben-Arieh, A., Casas, F., Frønes, I., & Korbin, J. (2014). Multifaceted Concept of Child Well-Being. In A. Ben-Arieh, F. Casas, I. Frønes, & J. Korbin (Eds.), *Handbook of Child Well-Being - Theories, Methods and Policies in Global Perspective* (pp. 1-28). New York: Springer.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Penguin Group.

Björk Eydal, G., & Satka, M. (2006). Social Work and Nordic Welfare Policies for Children—Present Challenges in the Light of the Past. *European Journal of Social Work, 9*(3), 305-322

Bordonaro, L. I., & Payne, R. (2012). Ambiguous Agency: Critical Perspectives on Social Interventions with Children and Youth in Africa. *Childrens Geographies, 10*(4), 365-372
Bradshaw, J., Hoelscher, P., & Richardson, D. (2007). An Index of Child Well-Being in the European Union. *Social Indicators Research, 80*(1), 133-177
Bradshaw, J., & Richardson, D. (2009). An Index of Child Well-Being in Europe. *Child Indicators Research, 2*(3), 319-351
Brannen, J., & Nilsen, A. (2002). Young People's Time Perspectives: From Youth to Adulthood. *Sociology-the Journal of the British Sociological Association, 36*(3), 513-537
Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101
Brooks, R., & Everett, G. (2008). The Prevalence of 'Life Planning': Evidence from Uk Graduates. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 29*(3), 325-337
Butler, R., & Muir, K. (2017). Young People's Education Biographies: Family Relationships, Social Capital and Belonging. *Journal of Youth Studies, 20*(3), 316-331
Byun, S. Y., Schofer, E., & Kim, K. K. (2012). Revisiting the Role of Cultural Capital in East Asian Educational Systems: The Case of South Korea. *Sociology of Education, 85*(3), 219-239
Cahill, H. (2015). Approaches to Understanding Youth Well-Being. In J. Wyn & H. Cahill (Eds.), *Handbook of Children and Youth Studies* (pp. 95-114). Singapore: Springer.
Cassidy, C. (2017). Wellbeing, Being Well or Well Becoming: Who or What Is It for and How Might We Get There? In M. Thorburn (Ed.), *Wellbeing, Education and Contemporary Schooling* (pp. 13-26). Oxford: Routledge.
Castro Campos, B., Ren, Y., & Petrick, M. (2016). The Impact of Education on Income Inequality between Ethnic Minorities and Han in China. *China Economic Review, 41*, 253-267
Chan, R. K. H., & Wang, Y. (2009). Controlled Decentralization: Minban Education Reform in China. *Journal of Comparative Social Welfare, 25*(1), 27-36
Chao, R. K. (1994). Beyond Parental Control and Authoritarian Parenting Style: Understanding Chinese Parenting through the Cultural Notion of Training. *Child Development, 65*(4), 1111-1119
Chao, R. K. (2001). Extending Research on the Consequences of Parenting Style for Chinese Americans and European Americans. *Child Development, 72*(6), 1832-1843
Chao, R. K., & Tseng, V. (2002). Parenting in Asians. In M. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of Parenting: Social Conditions and Applied Parenting* (Vol. 4, pp. 59-93). London: Lawrence Erlbaum.
Chappell, C., Solomon, N., Rhodes, C., Tennant, M., & Yates, L. (2003). *Reconstructing the Lifelong Learner: Pedagogy and Identity in Individual, Organisational and Social Change*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
Chaumba, J. (2013). The Use and Value of Mixed Methods Research in Social Work. *Advances in social work, 14*, 307-333
Cheah, C. S. L., Leung, C. Y. Y., & Zhou, N. (2013). Understanding "Tiger Parenting" through the Perceptions of Chinese Immigrant Mothers: Can Chinese and U.S. Parenting Coexist? *Asian American Journal of Psychology, 4*(1), 30
Cheang, C. J. Y., & Goh, E. C. L. (2018). Why Some Children from Poor Families Do Well-an in-Depth Analysis of Positive Deviance Cases in Singapore. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being, 13*
Chen-Bouck, L., Duan, C., & Patterson, M. M. (2017). A Qualitative Study of Urban, Chinese Middle-Class Mothers' Parenting for Adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 32*(4), 479-508

Chen, L., Yang, D., & Ren, Q. (2015). *Report on the State of Children in China*. Retrieved from Chicago: http://www.chapinhall.org/research/report/report-state-children-china
Chen, X., & Chen, H. (2010). Children's Socioemotional Functioning and Adjustment in the Changing Chinese Society. In R. K. Silbereisen & X. Chen (Eds.), *Social Change and Human Develpment: Concept and Results* (pp. 209-226). London: Sage Publication.
Cheung, H. S., & Sim, T. N. (2017). Social Support from Parents and Friends for Chinese Adolescents in Singapore. *Youth & Society, 49*(4), 548-564
Chu, P. S., Saucier, D. A., & Hafner, E. (2010). Meta-Analysis of the Relationships between Social Support and Well-Being in Children and Adolescents. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 29*(6), 624-645
Coffey, J., & Farrugia, D. (2014). Unpacking the Black Box: The Problem of Agency in the Sociology of Youth. *Journal of Youth Studies, 17*(4), 461-474
Coll, C., & Falsafi, L. (2010). Learner Identity. An Educational and Analytical Tool. *Revista de Educación (Madrid), 353*, 211-233
Cooley, C. H. (1922). *Human Nature and the Social Order*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
Cornell, K. L. (2006). Person-in-Situation: History, Theory, and New Directions for Social Work Practice. *Praxis, 6*(4), 50-57
Crossley, N. (2015). Relational Sociology and Culture: A Preliminary Framework. *International Review of Sociology, 25*(1), 65-85
Cuconato, M., & Walther, A. (2015). 'Doing Transitions' in Education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 28*(3), 283-296
Cuervo, H., & Wyn, J. (2014). Reflections on the Use of Spatial and Relational Metaphors in Youth Studies. *Journal of Youth Studies, 17*(7), 901-915
Cuervo, H., & Wyn, J. (2017). A Longitudinal Analysis of Belonging:Temporal, Performative and Relational Practices by Young People in Rural Australia. *Young, 25*(3), 219-234
Curran, T. D. (2014). A Response to Professor Wu Zongjie's 'Interpretation, Autonomy, and Transformation: Chinese Pedagogic Discourse in a Cross-Cultural Perspective'. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 46*(3), 305-312
Cutrona, C. E., & Russell, D. W. (1987). The Provisions of Social Relationships and Adaptation to Stress. *Advances in personal relationships, 1*(1), 37-67
Darling, N., & Steinberg, L. J. P. b. (1993). Parenting Style as Context: An Integrative Model. *Psychological bulletin, 113*(3), 487
Davies, K. (2011). *'Turning Out': Young People, Being and Becoming*. (PhD), University of Manchester, Manchester.
de Moll, F., & Betz, T. (2016). Accounting for Children's Agency in Research on Educational Inequality the Influence of Children's Own Practices on Their Academic Habitus in Elementary School. In F. Esser, M. S. Baader, T. Betz, & B. Hungerland (Eds.), *Reconceptualising Agency and Childhood: New Perspectives in Childhood Studies* (pp. 271-289). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
Denzin, N. K. (2001). The Reflexive Interview and a Performative Social Science. *Qualitative Research, 1*(1), 23-46
Dépelteau, F. (2013). What Is the Direction of the "Relational Turn"? In C. J. Powell & F. Dépelteau (Eds.), *Conceptualizing Relational Sociology : Ontological and Theoretical Issues* (pp. 163-186). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Desjardins, T. L., & Leadbeater, B. J. (2011). Relational Victimization and Depressive Symptoms in Adolescence: Moderating Effects of Mother, Father, and Peer Emotional Support. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 40*(5), 531-544
Donati, P. (2015). Manifesto for a Critical Realist Relational Sociology. *International Review of Sociology, 25*(1), 86-109

Donati, P. (2017). The Good Life as a Sharing of Relational Goods. *Relational Social Work, 1*(2), 5-25
Donati, P. (2018). An Original Relational Sociology Grounded in Critical Realism. In F. Dépelteau (Ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Relational Sociology* (pp. 431-456). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
Donati, P., & Archer, M. S. (2015). *The Relational Subject*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Dumais, S. A., & Ward, A. (2010). Cultural Capital and First-Generation College Success. *Poetics, 38*(3), 245-265
Emirbayer, M. (1997). Manifesto for a Relational Sociology. *American Journal of Sociology, 103*(2), 281-317
Emirbayer, M., & Mische, A. (1998). What Is Agency? *American Journal of Sociology, 103*(4), 962-1023
Esser, F. (2016). Neither "Thick" nor "Thin": Reconceptualising Agency and Childhood Relationality. In F. Esser, M. S. Baader, T. Betz, & B. Hungerland (Eds.), *Reconceptualising Agency and Childhood: New Perspectives in Childhood Studies* (pp. 48-60). London: Routledge.
Esser, F., Baader, M. S., Betz, T., & Hungerland, B. (2016). Reconceptualising Agency and Childhood: An Introduction. In F. Esser, M. S. Baader, T. Betz, & B. Hungerland (Eds.), *Reconceptualising Agency and Childhood: New Perspectives in Childhood Studies* (pp. 1-16). London: Routledge.
Evans, M. D. R., Kelley, J., & Sikora, J. (2014). Scholarly Culture and Academic Performance in 42 Nations. *Social Forces, 92*(4), 1573–1605
Featherstone, B., Morris, K., White, S., & White, S. (2014). *Re-Imagining Child Protection: Towards Humane Social Work with Families*. Clifton, Bristol: Policy Press.
Felczak, J., & Julkunen, I. (2016). Educational and Vocational Guidance as Support Mechanisms in Schools. In M. P. d. Amaral, M. Cuconato, R. Dale, & A. Walther (Eds.), *Governance of Educational Trajectories in Europe : Pathways, Policy and Practice* (pp. 141-160). London: Bloomsbury Academic.
Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating Rigor Using Thematic Analysis: A Hybrid Approach of Inductive and Deductive Coding and Theme Development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 5*(1), 80-92
Fielding, J., Fielding, N., Hughes, G. J. Q., & Quantity. (2013). Opening up Open-Ended Survey Data Using Qualitative Software. *Quality & Quantity, 47*(6), 3261-3276
Fish, K. (2013). Relational Sociology and Historical Materialism: Three Conversation Starters. In C. J. Powell & F. o. Dépelteau (Eds.), *Conceptualizing Relational Sociology : Ontological and Theoretical Issues* (pp. 27-44). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Fjeldheim, S., Levin, I., & Engebretsen, E. (2015). The Theoretical Foundation of Social Case Work. *Nordic Social Work Research, 5*(sup1), 42-55
Folgheraiter, F. (2004). *Relational Social Work: Toward Networking and Societal Practices*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
Folgheraiter, F., & Raineri, M. L. (2012). A Critical Analysis of the Social Work Definition According to the Relational Paradigm. *55*(4), 473-487
Fong, V. L. (2002). China's One-Child Policy and the Empowerment of Urban Daughters. *American Anthropologist, 104*(4), 1098-1109
Fong, V. L. (2004). *Only Hope: Coming of Age under China's One-Child Policy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Francis, B., Mau, A., & Archer, L. (2017). The Construction of British Chinese Educational Success: Exploring the Shifting Discourses in Educational Debate, Andtheir Effects. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 43*(14), 2331-2345

Freeman, M., & Mathison, S. (2009). *Researching Children's Experiences*. New York: The Guilford Press.
Frønes, I. (2007). Theorizing Indicators. *Social Indicators Research, 83*(1), 5-23
Fuchs, S. (2001). Beyond Agency. *Sociological Theory, 19*(1), 24-40
Fuhse, J. A. (2018). Deconstructing and Reconstructing Social Networks. In F. Dépelteau (Ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Relational Sociology* (pp. 457-479). Sudbury: Springer.
Fuligni, A., & Zhang, W. (2004). Attitudes toward Family Obligation among Adolescents in Contemporary Urban and Rural China. *Child Development, 75*(1), 180-192
Fuligni, A. J. (2001). Family Obligation and the Academic Motivation of Adolescents from Asian, Latin American, and European Backgrounds. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 2001*(94), 61-76
Furlong, A. (2013). *Youth Studies : An Introduction*. New York: Routledge.
Furlong, A., & Cartmel, F. (2007). *Young People and Social Change: New Perspectives* (second ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.
Furlong, A., Woodman, D., & Wyn, J. (2011). Changing Times, Changing Perspectives: Reconciling 'Transition' and 'Cultural' Perspectives on Youth and Young Adulthood. *Journal of Sociology, 47*(4), 355-370
GOV. (2002). Decision of the State Council on Vigorously Developing the Vocational Education. Retrieved from http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2002/content_61755.htm
Greene, J. C., Kreider, H., & Mayer, E. (2005). Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Social Inquiry. In B. Somekh & C. Lewin (Eds.), *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (pp. 274-282). London: Sage publications.
Guest, G. (2013). Describing Mixed Methods Research:An Alternative to Typologies. *7*(2), 141-151
Hansen, M. H., & Woronov, T. E. (2013). Demanding and Resisting Vocational Education: A Comparative Study of Schools in Rural and Urban China. *Comparative Education, 49*(2), 242-259
Harré, R., & Moghaddam, F. (2003). Introduction: The Self and Others in Traditional Psychology and in Positioning Theory. In R. Harré & F. Moghaddam (Eds.), *The Self and Others : Positioning Individuals and Groups in Personal, Political, and Cultural Contexts* (pp. 1-11). Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
Harrikari, T., & Rauhala, P.-L. (2018). *Towards Glocal Social Work in the Era of Compressed Modernity: Towards an Era of Distorted Modernity*. London: Routledge.
Heinz, W. R. (2009). Youth Transitions in an Age of Uncertainty. In A. Furlong (Ed.), *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood: New Perspectives and Agendas* (pp. 3-13). London: Routledge.
Hitlin, S., & Elder, G. H. (2007). Time, Self, and the Curiously Abstract Concept of Agency. *Sociological Theory, 25*(2), 170-191
Hopkins, P. E. (2010). *Young People, Place and Identity* (1 ed.). London: Routledge.
International Federation of Social Workers. (2014). Global Definition of Social Work. Retrieved from https://www.ifsw.org/what-is-social-work/global-definition-of-social-work/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CSocial%20work%20is%20a%20practice,are%20central%20to%20social%20work.
Iphofen, R. (2011). *Ethical Decision Making in Social Research: A Practical Guide*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Irwin, S. (2018). Parenting Teenagers as They Grow Up: Values, Practices and Young People's Pathways Beyond School in England. *Sociological Review, 66*(1), 241-256
Irwin, S., & Elley, S. (2013). Parents' Hopes and Expectations for Their Children's Future Occupations. *Sociological Review, 61*(1), 111-130

James, A. (2007). Giving Voice to Children's Voices: Practices and Problems, Pitfalls and Potentials. *American Anthropologist, 109*(2), 261-272
James, A. (2013). *Socialising Children*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
James, A., & James, A. L. (2004). *Constructing Childhood : Theory, Policy and Social Practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
James, A., & Prout, A. (2015). *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*: Routledge Education Classic Edition.
Jenkins, R. (2008). *Social Identity*. London: Routledge.
Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Turner, L. A. (2007). Toward a Definition of Mixed Methods Research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*(2), 112-133
Julkunen, I., & Rauhala, P.-L. (2013). Otherness, Social Welfare and Social Work – a Nordic Perspective. *Nordic Social Work Research, 3*(2), 105-119
Juvonen, T. (2014). Fragile Agencies in the Making: Challenges of Independent Living in Emerging Adulthood. *Young, 22*(3)
Kam, P. K. (2014). Back to the 'Social' of Social Work: Reviving the Social Work Profession's Contribution to the Promotion of Social Justice. *57*(6), 723-740
Kamerman, S. B., & Gatenio-Gabel, S. (2014). Social Work and Child Well-Being. In A. Ben-Arieh, F. Casas, I. Frønes, & J. Korbin (Eds.), *Handbook of Child Well-Being - Theories, Methods and Policies in Global Perspective* (pp. 403-413). New York: Springer.
Keddie, A. (2016). Children of the Market: Performativity, Neoliberal Responsibilisation and the Construction of Student Identities. *Oxford Review of Education, 42*(1), 108-122
Ketokivi, K. (2010). *The Relational Self, the Social Bond and the Dynamics of Personal Relationships: A Sosiological Analysis*. (Doctor), University of Helsinki, Finland. (263)
Kim, S. W., Brown, K.-E., & Fong, V. L. (2016). Credentialism and Career Aspirations: How Urban Chinese Youth Chose High School and College Majors. *Comparative Education Review, 60*(2), 271-292
Kipnis, A. B. (2011). *Governing Educational Desire: Culture, Politics, and Schooling in China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Kipnis, A. B. (2011). Subjectification and Education for Quality in China. *Economy and Society, 40*(2), 289-306
Kuczynski, L., & De Mol, J. (2015). Dialectical Models of Socialization. In W. Overton & P. Molenaar (Eds.), *Handbook of Child Psychology and Developmental Science* (7 ed., Vol. theory of method, pp. 323-368). New Jersey: Wiley.
Kuczynski, L., & Parkin, C. M. (2007). Agency and Bidirectionality in Socialization: Interactions, Transactions, and Relational Dialectics. In J. E. Grusec & P. D. Hastings (Eds.), *Handbook of Socialization* (pp. 259-283). New York: Guilford Press.
Lahelma, E., & Gordon, T. (2008). Resources and (in(Ter))Dependence - Young People's Reflections on Parents. *Young, 16*(2), 209-226
Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal Childhoods : Class, Race, and Family Life* (1 ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press.
Laursen, B., & Collins, W. A. (2009). Parent-Child Relationships During Adolescence. In L. R. M. & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology* (Vol. Contextual Influences On adolescent development, pp. 3-42). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
Lawler, S. (2014). *Identity: Sociological Perspectives*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Leccardi, C. (2005). Facing Uncertainty:Temporality and Biographies in the New Century. *Young, 13*(2), 123-146
Leccardi, C. (2012). Young People's Representations of the Future and the Acceleration of Time: A Generational Approach. *Diskurs Kindheits- und Jugendforschung / Discourse. Journal of Childhood and Adolescence Research, 7*(1), 59-73

Leccardi, C. (2014). Time of Society and Time of Experience: Multiple Times and Social Change %J Kronoscope. *14*(1), 10
Liu, A., & Xie, Y. (2015). Influences of Monetary and Non-Monetary Family Resources on Children's Development in Verbal Ability in China. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility, 40*, 59–70
Liu, F. (2008). Negotiating the Filial Self Young-Adult Only-Children and Intergenerational Relationships in China. *Young, 16*(4), 409-430
Liu, F. (2010). *Urban Youth in China: Modernity, the Internet and the Self*. Ney York: Routldege.
Liu, F. (2020). *Modernization as Lived Experiences: Three Generations of Young Men and Women in China*. Oxon: Routledge.
Lu, S. (2015). Security System Construction of Subsistence and Development of Left-Behind Children [in Chinese]. *Youth & Children Research and Practice, 1*
Lundqvist, C. (2019). Time Horizons in Young People´S Career Narratives – Strategies, Temporal Orientations and Imagined Parallel Futures Negotiated in Local Settings. *Education Inquiry*, 1-18
Ma, X., Wang, Z., & Liu, X. (2019). Progress on Catastrophic Health Expenditure in China: Evidence from China Family Panel Studies (Cfps) 2010 to 2016. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 16*(23)
Maccoby, E., & Martin, J. (1983). Socialization in the Context of the Family: Parent-Child Interaction. In P. Mussen & E. Hetherington (Eds.), *Handbook of Child Psychology: Formerly Carmichael's of Child Psychology* (Vol. 4). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
Maccoby, E. E. (2014). Historical Overview of Socialization Research and Theory. In J. E. Grusec & P. D. Hastings (Eds.), *Handbook of Socialization, Second Edition : Theory and Research* (pp. 3-32). New York: Guilford Publications.
Martorano, B., Natali, L., de Neubourg, C., & Bradshaw, J. (2014). Child Well-Being in Advanced Economies in the Late 2000s. *Social Indicators Research, 118*(1), 247-283
Mayall, B. (2002). *Towards a Sociology for Childhood: Thinking from Children's Lives*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
Mayall, B. (2009). Generational Relations at Family Level. In W. A. Corsaro, M.-S. Honig, & J. Qvortrup (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies* (pp. 175-187). Basingstoke: Springer.
Mayall, B. (2015). Understanding Inter-Generational Relations: The Case of Health Maintenance by Children. *Sociology of health & illness, 37*(2), 312-324
Mayring, P. (2014). Qualitative Content Analysis: Theoretical Foundation, Basic Procedures and Software Solution. Retrieved from http://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/39517
McGrath, B., Brennan, M. A., Dolan, P., & Barnett, R. (2014). Adolescents and Their Networks of Social Support: Real Connections in Real Lives? *Child & Family Social Work, 19*(2), 237-248
McLeod, J. (2014). Temporality and Identity in Youth Research. In E. P. Hart, M. Peters, & A. Reid (Eds.), *A Companion to Research in Education* (pp. 311-313). Dordrecht: Springer.
McLeod, J. (2017). Marking Time, Making Methods: Temporality and Untimely Dilemmas in the Sociology of Youth and Educational Change. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 38*(1), 13-25
McLeod, J., & Yates, L. (2006). *Making Modern Lives : Subjectivity, Schooling, and Social Change*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Milne, E., & Aurini, J. (2015). Schools, Cultural Mobility and Social Reproduction: The Case of Progressive Discipline. *Canadian Journal of Sociology, 40*(1), 51-74
Mishna, F., Antle, B. J., & Regehr, C. (2004). Tapping the Perspectives of Children:Emerging Ethical Issues in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Social Work, 3*(4), 449-468
MOE. (2017). National Education Development Statistics Bulletin in 2016. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/sjzl_fztjgb/201707/t20170710_309042.html
MOE. (2020). *National Education Development Statistics Bulletin in 2019*. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/sjzl_fztjgb/202005/t20200520_456751.html
Mok, K. H., & Wu, A. M. (2016). Higher Education, Changing Labour Market and Social Mobility in the Era of Massification in China. *Journal of Education and Work, 29*(1), 77-97
Morgan, D. (1996). *Family Connections: An Introduction to Family Studies*. Cambridge: Polity Press Cambridge.
Morrow, V. (2001). Using Qualitative Methods to Elicit Young People's Perspectives on Their Environments: Some Ideas for Community Health Initiatives. *Health Education Research, 16*(3), 255-268
Morrow, V. (2002). Perspectives on Children's Agency within Families: A View from the Sociology of Childhood. In L. Kuczynski (Ed.), *Handbook of Dynamics in Parent-Child Relations* (pp. 109-126). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.
Morrow, V., & Richards, M. (1996). The Ethics of Social Research with Children: An Overview. *Children & Society, 10*(2), 90-105
Mullaly, B., & Mullaly, R. P. (2007). *The New Structural Social Work*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Murphy, D., Duggan, M., & Joseph, S. (2012). Relationship-Based Social Work and Its Compatibility with the Person-Centred Approach: Principled Versus Instrumental Perspectives. *The British Journal of Social Work, 43*(4), 703-719
National Data. (2020). China Statistical Database: Annual by Province. Retrieved from http://data.stats.gov.cn/english/easyquery.htm?cn=E0103
Ngan-ling Chow, E., & Zhao, S. M. (1996). The One-Child Policy and Parent-Child Relationships: A Comparison of One-Child with Multiple-Child Families in China. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, 16*(12), 35-62
Nielsen, H. B. (1996). The Magic Writing-Pad- on Gender and Identity Work. *Young, 4*(3), 2-18
Nielsen, H. B. (2016). The Arrow of Time in the Space of the Present: Temporality as Methodological and Theoretical Dimension in Child Research. *30*(1), 1-11
Nowotny, H. (1994). *Time: The Modern and Postmodern Experience*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Park, S. M., Cho, S. I., & Moon, S. S. (2010). Factors Associated with Suicidal Ideation: Role of Emotional and Instrumental Support. *Journal of psychosomatic research, 69*(4), 389-397
Parkin, C. M., & Kuczynski, L. (2012). Adolescent Perspectives on Rules and Resistance within the Parent-Child Relationship. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 27*(5), 632-658
Peking University Open Research Data. (2019). Cfps Public Data. Retrieved 30th Sep, 2020 https://opendata.pku.edu.cn/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.18170/DVN/45LCSO
Peled, E., & Leichtentritt, R. (2002). The Ethics of Qualitative Social Work Research. *Qualitative Social Work, 1*(2), 145-169
Phelan, S. K., & Kinsella, E. A. (2013). Picture This . . . Safety, Dignity, and Voice—Ethical Research with Children:Practical Considerations for the Reflexive Researcher. *Qualitative Inquiry, 19*(2), 81-90

Piko, B. F., & Balázs, M. Á. (2012). Authoritative Parenting Style and Adolescent Smoking and Drinking. *Addictive Behaviors, 37*(3), 353-356
Pinkerton, J., & Dolan, P. (2007). Family Support, Social Capital, Resilience and Adolescent Coping. *Child & Family Social Work, 12*(3), 219-228
Pollard, E. L., & Lee, P. D. (2003). Child Well-Being: A Systematic Review of the Literature. *Social Indicators Research, 61*(1), 59-78
Pomerantz, E. M., Qin, L., Wang, Q., & Chen, H. (2011). Changes in Early Adolescents' Sense of Responsibility to Their Parents in the United States and China: Implications for Academic Functioning. *Child Development, 82*(4), 1136-1151
Popping, R. (2015). Analyzing Open-Ended Questions by Means of Text Analysis Procedures. *Bulletin of Sociological Methodology, 128*(1), 23-39
Powell, C. (2013). Radical Relationism: A Proposal. In C. Powell & F. Dépelteau (Eds.), *Conceptualizing Relational Sociology: Ontological and Theoretical Issues* (pp. 187-208). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Powell, C. J., & Dépelteau, F. o. (2013). Introduction. In C. J. Powell & F. o. Dépelteau (Eds.), *Conceptualizing Relational Sociology : Ontological and Theoretical Issues* (pp. 1-12). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Prandini, R. (2015). Relational Sociology: A Well-Defined Sociological Paradigm or a Challenging 'Relational Turn' in Sociology? *International Review of Sociology, 25*(1), 1-14
Prout, A. (2005). *The Future of Childhood*. London: Routledge.
Punch, S. (2016). Exploring Children's Agency across Majority and Minority World Contexts. In F. Esser, M. S. Baader, T. Betz, & B. Hungerland (Eds.), *Reconceptualising Agency and Childhood: New Perspectives in Childhood Studies* (pp. 1-16). London: Routledge.
Qi, X. (2016). Family Bond and Family Obligation: Continuity and Transformation. *Journal of Sociology, 52*(1), 39-52
Qvortrup, J. (2009). Childhood as a Structural Form. In W. A. Corsaro, M.-S. Honig, & J. Qvortrup (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies* (pp. 159-174). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Reay, D. (2010). Identity Making in Schools and Classrooms. In M. Wetherell & C. T. Mohanty (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Identities* (pp. 277-294). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
Resilience Research Centre. (2020). *Review of Adoelscents Service Research in Mainland China*. Retrieved from https://resilienceresearch.org/files/PDF/Mainland_China_Youth_Services_Research.pdf
Rivers, J., Mullis, A. K., Fortner, L. A., & Mullis, R. L. (2012). Relationships between Parenting Styles and the Academic Performance of Adolescents. *Journal of Family Social Work, 15*(3), 202-216
Roberts, S. (2011). Beyond 'Neet' and 'Tidy' Pathways: Considering the 'Missing Middle' of Youth Transition Studies. *Journal of Youth Studies, 14*(1), 21-39
Roche, J. (1999). Children: Rights, Participation and Citizenship. *Childhood-a Global Journal of Child Research, 6*(4), 475-493
Rosa, H. (2003). Social Acceleration: Ethical and Political Consequences of a Desynchronized High–Speed Society. *Constellations, 10*(1), 3-33
Ruch, G. (2005). Relationship-Based Practice and Reflective Practice: Holistic Approaches to Contemporary Child Care Social Work. *Child & Family Social Work, 10*(2), 111-123
Saldana, J. (2013). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (2 ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

Sameroff, A. (2010). A Unified Theory of Development: A Dialectic Integration of Nature and Nurture. *Child Development, 81*(1), 6-22
Satka, M. (2016). Looking to the Past for the Sustainable Social Work of the Future. In T. Harrikari, P.-L. Rauhala, & E. Virokannas (Eds.), *Social Change and Social Work: The Changing Societal Conditions of Social Work in Time and Place* (pp. 193-202): Routledge.
Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*. Los Angeles Sage
Sedikides, C., & Brewer, M. B. (2001). Individual Self, Relational Self, and Collective Self: Partners, Opponents, or Strangers? In C. Sedikides & M. B. Brewer (Eds.), *Individual Self, Relational Self, Collective Self* (pp. 1-6). Philadelphia: Psychology Press.
Shakespeare-Finch, J., & Obst, P. L. (2011). The Development of the 2-Way Social Support Scale: A Measure of Giving and Receiving Emotional and Instrumental Support. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 93*(5), 483-490
Sharland, E. (2005). Young People, Risk Taking and Risk Making: Some Thoughts for Social Work. *The British Journal of Social Work, 36*(2), 247-265
Sheng, X. (2014a). *Higher Education Choice in China: Social Stratification, Gender and Educational Inequality*. London: Routledge.
Sheng, X. (2014b). Parental Expectations Relating to Children's Higher Education in Urban China: Cultural Capital and Social Class. *Journal of Sociology, 50*(4), 560-576
Shih, Y.-P., & Yi, C.-C. (2014). Cultivating the Difference: Social Class, Parental Values, Cultural Capital and Children's after-School Activities in Taiwan. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 45*(1), 55-75,56,10,14
Spyrou, S. (2020). Children as Future-Makers. *27*(1), 3-7
Stewart, S. M., Bond, M. H., Kennard, B. D., Ho, L. M., & Zaman, R. M. (2002). Does the Chinese Construct of Guan Export to the West? *International Journal of Psychology, 37*(2), 74-82
Sulimani-Aidan, Y. (2019). Qualitative Exploration of Supporting Figures in the Lives of Emerging Adults Who Left Care Compared with Their Noncare-Leaving Peers. *Child & Family Social Work, 24*(2), 247-255
Tang, J. (2016). "Lost at the Starting Line": A Reconsideration of Educational Inequality in China, 1978–2008. *The Journal of Chinese Sociology, 3*(8), 1-18
Tao, V. Y. K., & Hong, Y.-y. (2014). When Academic Achievement Is an Obligation: Perspectives from Social-Oriented Achievement Motivation. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 45*(1), 110-136
te Riele, K. (2004). Youth Transition in Australia: Challenging Assumptions of Linearity and Choice. *Journal of Youth Studies, 7*(3), 243-257
Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*: Sage.
TENK. (2009). *Ethical Principles of Research in the Humanities and Social and Behavioural Sciences and Proposals*. Retrieved from http://www.tenk.fi/en/ethical-review-in-human-sciences
TENK. (2019). *The Ethical Principles of Research with Human Participants and Ethical Review in the Human Sciences in Finland*. Retrieved from https://tenk.fi/sites/tenk.fi/files/Ihmistieteiden_eettisen_ennakkoarvioinnin_ohje_2019.pdf
Thomson, R., Bell, R., Holland, J., Henderson, S., McGrellis, S., & Sharpe, S. (2002). Critical Moments: Choice, Chance and Opportunity in Young People's Narratives of Transition. *Sociology-the Journal of the British Sociological Association, 36*(2), 335-354
Tobin, J., Hsueh, Y., & Karasawa, M. (2009). *Preschool in Three Cultures Revisited: China, Japan, and the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tu, W. (1985). *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
Ule, M., Zivoder, A., Lunabba, H., & Du Bois-Reymond, M. (2016). Teachers and Parents as Actors in the Students Educational Transitions. In A. Walther, M. Parreira do Amaral, M. Cuconato, & R. Dale (Eds.), *Governance of Educational Trajectories in Europe : Pathways, Policy and Practice* (pp. 247-264). London ; New York: Bloomsbury.
UNICEF. (2006). Convention on the Rights of the Child. Retrieved from https://www.unicef-irc.org/portfolios/general_comments/GC7.Rev.1_en.doc.html
UNICEF. (2012). *Progress for Children: A Report Card on Adolescents (No. 10)*. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/publications/index_62280.html
UNICEF. (2020). Unicef and the Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/sdgs
UNICEF and Protecting Through Education. (2013). *Actions for Children and Youth Resilience: Guide for Governments*. Retrieved from Panama: https://www.unicef.org/lac/sites/unicef.org.lac/files/2018-06/CandY_guide_for_governments.pdf
United Nations. (2009). Convention on the Rights of the Child: General Comment No.12. *CRC/C/GC/12*. Retrieved from https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC-C-GC-12.pdf
Uprichard, E. (2008). Children as 'Being and Becomings': Children, Childhood and Temporality. *Children & Society, 22*(4), 303-313
Vaismoradi, M., & Snelgrove, S. (2019). *Theme in Qualitative Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis*. Paper presented at the Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research.
Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis: Implications for Conducting a Qualitative Descriptive Study. *Nursing and Health Sciences, 15*(3), 398-405
Valentine, G., & Skelton, T. (2007). Re-Defining 'Norms': D/Deaf Young People's Transitions to Independence. *55*(1), 104-123
Vieira, M. M., Pappamikail, L., & Resende, J. (2013). Forced to Deal with the Future: Uncertainty and Risk in Vocational Choices among Portuguese Secondary School Students. *Sociological Review, 61*(4), 745-768
Wang, Q., Pomerantz, E. M., & Chen, H. (2007). The Role of Parents' Control in Early Adolescents' Psychological Functioning: A Longitudinal Investigation in the United States and China. *Child Development, 78*(5), 1592-1610
Wang, Y. (2014). In Search of the Confucian Family: Interviews with Parents and Their Middle School Children in Guangzhou, China. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 29*(6), 765-782
Wang, Y. C., & Anderson, J. A. (2014). Differentiating Ideals Versus Practices in the Discussion of Confucian Influences on Chinese Parent–Child Relationships. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 6*(3)
Way, N., Okazaki, S., Zhao, J., Kim, J. J., Chen, X., Yoshikawa, H., . . . Deng, H. (2013). Social and Emotional Parenting: Mothering in a Changing Chinese Society. *Asian American Journal of Psychology, 4*(1), 61-70
White, R., & Wyn, J. (1998). Youth Agency and Social Context. *Journal of Sociology, 34*(3), 314-327
Wilkins, A. (2012). Push and Pull in the Classroom: Competition, Gender and the Neoliberal Subject. *Gender and Education, 24*(7), 765-781
WMA. (1964–2013). *World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects*. Retrieved from

https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-helsinki-ethical-principles-for-medical-research-involving-human-subjects/
Woodman, D. (2011). Young People and the Future: Multiple Temporal Orientations Shaped in Interaction with Significant Others. *Young, 19*(2), 111-128
Woodman, D., & Leccardi, C. (2015). Time and Space in Youth Studiestimespace. In J. Wyn & H. Cahill (Eds.), *Handbook of Children and Youth Studies* (pp. 705-721). Singapore: Springer Singapore.
Woodman, E., & McArthur, M. (2017). Young People's Experiences of Family Connectedness: Supporting Social Work Practice with Families and Young People. *The British Journal of Social Work, 48*(3), 693-713
Worth, N. (2009). Understanding Youth Transition as 'Becoming': Identity, Time and Futurity. *Geoforum, 40*(6), 1050-1060
Wu, M.-Y. (2013). The Concept of Guan in the Chinese Parent-Child Relationship. In C.-C. Yi (Ed.), *The Psychological Well-Being of East Asian Youth* (pp. 29-49). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
Wu, X. (2017). Higher Education, Elite Formation and Social Stratification in Contemporary China: Preliminary Findings from the Beijing College Students Panel Survey. *Chinese Journal of Sociology, 3*(1), 3-31
Wyn, J., & Dwyer, P. (1999). New Directions in Research on Youth in Transition. *Journal of Youth Studies, 2*(1), 5-21
Wyn, J., Lantz, S., & Harris, A. (2011). Beyond the 'Transitions' Metaphor: Family Relations and Young People in Late Modernity. *Journal of Sociology, 48*(1), 3-22
Wyn, J., & Woodman, D. (2006). Generation, Youth and Social Change in Australia. *Journal of Youth Studies, 9*(5), 495-514
Wyness, M. (2009). Children Representing Children Participation and the Problem of Diversity in Uk Youth Councils. *Childhood-a Global Journal of Child Research, 16*(4), 535-552
Yamamoto, Y., & Brinton, M. C. (2010). Cultural Capital in East Asian Educational Systems: The Case of Japan. *Sociology of Education, 83*(1), 67-83
Yang, J., & Zhao, X. (2020). Parenting Styles and Children's Academic Performance: Evidence from Middle Schools in China. *Children and Youth Services Review, 113*, 105017
You, Y. (2019). The Seeming 'Round Trip' of Learner-Centred Education: A 'Best Practice' Derived from China's New Curriculum Reform? *Comparative Education, 55*(1)
Yue, C., & Zhou, L. (2019). Analysis of Employment Trends for Chinese College Graduates from 2003 to 2017. *Chinese Education & Society, 52*(3-4), 249-273
Zhao, G., & Deng, Z. (2016). Introduction. In G. Zhao & Z. Deng (Eds.), *Re-Envisioning Chinese Education: The Meaning of Person-Making in a New Age* (pp. 1-9). London: Routledge.
Zhao, X. (2015). *Competition and Compassion in Chinese Secondary Education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Zhu, S., Tse, S., Cheung, S. H., & Oyserman, D. (2014). Will I Get There? Effects of Parental Support on Children's Possible Selves. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 84*(Pt 3), 435-453

8 APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1 INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Personal information

Could you first describe you and your family from the following perspectives: age, (parents') work and (participants') school lives, personalities, family structures and family relationships?

Could you describe a typical day for you and your family (leisure activities and communication)?

2. Family relationship

(1) In your short essay, you described your child-parent relationship as . . . . Could you explain that more?

(2) Do you feel that your child-parent relationship has changed? How and when has it changed? Are there any 'critical happenings' that lead to these changes?

(3) How do you think about your child-parent relationship (satisfaction and expectations)?

3. School transition

In your essay, you described the challenges in your last year of middle school.

(1) Who do you usually seek support from your parents to solve these difficulties, such as parents, peers and teachers? How do they help you to cope with difficulties? What are the differences between these types of support?

(2) How do you understand this last year of middle school (and *zhongkao*) in the context of your whole life? How do you think about your future? How about your parents' roles in your future?

APPENDIX 2 INFORMATION LETTER FOR OPEN-ENDED SURVEY (AND INTERVIEW)

I am Wang Ziyu, and I am planning to conduct a study of school transitions and the importance of the children-parent relationship. I am pursuing my doctoral social work degree at the University of Helsinki, Finland. This is my second-year study, and I am conducting my research with Chinese adolescents, like you. I am interested in how Chinese adolescents and their families experience the transition to high school. I will ask you to write essays (interview you) to discuss what you have experienced and imagine.

Please write down (talk about) your authentic experience and understanding of the topics I will present later. You can openly write (talk) about anything you want to say about your life. There are no right or wrong answers. All your answers are considered confidential and kept by me. I won't share your answers with any other person. When discussing or publishing the data, I will change you and your school's real names to fake ones.

(If you want to share more of your lives with me, please write down the words 'I want to participate in individual interviews' at the bottom of your report. I will contact you personally and make the appointment for your individual interview.)